

Future Action

Over the last year NUS/UNE has more than doubled its membership and budget, and on paper, become the viable organization towards which we have been striving since its inception. We have overcome the financial limitations which have always stunted our ability to do the kinds of organizing and research which we have planned in the past. Although over a number of years we have been developing strategy, we have always been forced to cut back and restrict our action because of the lack of representation and money. However, this year, for the first time we have the strength, both financially and representationally to start seriously developing our political direction.

NUS/UNE has always focused around the demand for full accessibility to post secondary education. As we have developed as an organization and begun to research accessibility, its implications have continued to widen. We have seen the financial barriers to education as the primary limiting factor. The breadth of these financial barriers has become increasingly clear. Furthermore, we have begun to recognize the basic interrelationship of the many financial factors in limiting education, not only directly student related issues such as student aid, tuition, summer employment etc, but also broader issues which link us with society such as social service cut backs, wage controls, the availability of housing etc.

At this conference we have drawn up an agenda which includes workshops on most of these issues. Through the resource papers we have prepared and through the workshops, we hope to be able to clarify this interrelationship of factors limiting accessibility and provide a basis for the formation of a broader perspective on future direction.

Over the past two years we have seen through the student aid campaign that government lobbying alone will not bring about significant changes. For the most part we have realized that it is only through a broad and organized base to back up government lobbying that we can begin to achieve our goals. After a year of extraordinary growth but a lack of political co-ordination we are in a position to build that base. It is upon this background of growth and perspective we must consider our future.

As a result of the referenda campaigns we ran last year, we have gained visibility and support on campuses. Now we must maintain that high profile and begin to develop it from internal goals, (passing referenda) to political goals, (Accessibility). If we do not start this immediately, the initial work of creating a NUS/UNE presence on campuses which we have done, will disipate.

The Central Committee has recommended that NUS/UNE expand its staff mainly in the areas of researchers and fieldworkers. We believe

that fieldworkers must be a priority in order to stimulate campus organizing around strategies we develop at this conference. They can provide the link between the organization and the membership which we need. We have also recommended a researcher be hired. We see the researchers job as vital because, while at this conference we hope to demonstrate the wide nature of the financial barriers to post secondary education, more research into its precise nature and sound reasoned documents on it must be forthcoming if we are to convince all students about the nature of the fight.

The Central Committee, considering the strength, perspective and presence of NUS/UNE recommends that the organization intensify the development of the issue of financial barriers to education. We believe that NUS/UNE must initiate an informational campaign to familiarize student with the whole issue. This campaign must begin during the summer with institutional, provincial and national strategy as well as research papers from the national, perspective and papers highlighting local aspects of the issue.

As part of this campaign we recommend a national student day in november to back up government lobbying with national student support. We recommend that it be co-ordinated with provincial and regional organizations and that the forms of action to be taken be left as wide as possible in recognition of provincial and institutional differences. If this is the direction in which the membership wishes to go, work must begin immediately to prepare for the national day, although we must avoid allowing it to become an end in itself.

The Central Committee sees this as the essential direction and action which NUS/UNE must take. It is within this framework that we believe discussion at this conference should take place.

May 12, 1976

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The background reports prepared for this conference contain information needed for your deliberations on the issues of concern to Canadian students. We offer a comment at the outset.

This organization's creation was in response to negotiation of the 1972 federal-provincial fiscal arrangements for post-secondary education. It is during the coming year that similar negotiations are coming to a conclusion. This is certain to shape the tone and content of much work done by NUS/UNE in 1976-77. It is an occasion to present the concerns and viewpoint of Canadian post-secondary students on the educational system they are faced with. Fiscal arrangements reflect basic governmental policy, and are not changed often. Students must seize this opportunity.

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When this Central Committee took office the future of NUS/UNE was in doubt. People decided that a sound financial base was prerequisite to further operation, and that base could be created only by speedy and generous contributions from student unions — special financing.

Our first two months in office were occupied with fund-raising for the special financing of NUS/UNE. There was a strong sense that the special financing would fail and with it NUS/UNE. Student unions in every part of the country responded, however, and on July 5, 1975 it was clear that the effort had had been successful. Thirty-one thousand dollars had been pledged, more than \$25,000 received.

That affirmation of support for NUS/UNE proved to most who were still doubting that this is a viable organization. In retrospect it appears that the special financing campaign turned the impetus of student aid work into a rapid increase of support for NUS/UNE.

Only once before this year were there so many campuses voting on membership in national organization. (In 1968-69 hostile referenda destroyed the older and larger Canadian Union of Students.) No one in NUS/UNE even comprehended what it would mean to face twenty-nine referenda in one academic year. The effect on most day-to-day NUS/UNE activity was disastrous, leading to feelings of frustration and isolation.

Still, the success of the referenda should not be overlooked even if their short-term effect was not fully anticipated. Until the 1975-76 academic year NUS/UNE was at a stage where many student leaders knew little about the organization while students were rarely aware of NUS/UNE.

As this meeting begins there is a "high profile" for the organization. The student population of the member and referendum campuses is more than half of

all post-secondary students outside of Québec. Within student governments the knowledge about and interest in NUS/UNE is noticeably greater.

WHAT KIND OF NATIONAL UNION ?

The success of the referenda (on only three campuses did a majority of those voting oppose membership) means that at this conference the delegates will be building a new organization. The inhibitions created by the CUS collapse and NUS/UNE's growing pains meant that in both size and function the focus of NUS/UNE in its early years was creation of a viable national students' organization. The task proved to be difficult but now it is done. The number of referenda to join NUS/UNE in 1976-77 may well exceed 20, but no longer will that activity be the focus of NUS/UNE.

This will be an established organization, although still a growing one. Students in eight provinces have voted both political and financial support for NUS/UNE and now their support must receive a response. This conference will outline the issues and methods of operation to consolidate this new organization, the established NUS/UNE. To provide a starting point for your deliberations, the first sections of our report discuss and make recommendations concerning the kind of national union that Canadian post-secondary students should have in 1976-77.

While federal-provincial negotiations will set the atmosphere for NUS/UNE work in 1976-77, you and the new Central Committee should be conscious of ways in which the national union begins to truly serve students. An aware and flexible attitude will be required to avoid two pitfalls. One of these is a rigidly dogmatic approach which sacrifices responsiveness to the dictates of a predetermined master plan. The other is an uncontrolled and unrealistic attempt to be all things to all people, with the result being high expectations and a scattered, superficial performance. Our stated recommendations try to establish general guidelines for the kind of national union that Canadian students will have, which leave sufficient room for flexibility as the year unfolds and experience is gained. The fall conference will have a great deal of evaluation to do.

Priorities

The over-riding consideration for NUS/UNE in the future must be its presence on the campuses. Most referendums have used the slogan "NUS is Us" but if this organization wants credibility and survival in the long run that phrase must be more than a slogan. NUS/UNE undertakings should be judged in terms of the extent to which they serve students, not simply in terms of mechanical feasibility. A significant proportion of NUS/UNE resources should be devoted to on-campus work such as communications, support of local work, stimulation of student leaders, etc.

This kind of presence means that from campus to campus and province to province there will be variations in the ways that NUS/UNE is seen and used. An important factor is perception of NUS/UNE. The common work of Canadian students will be carried out well if, on the various campuses, NUS/UNE is perceived as something to which the students belong, something in which they participate and which provides their action with support. The support gained from participation in NUS/UNE may be research, advice, moral or financial help from other campuses, and so on. Such support is not to be perceived as a purchased service, or else there will be failure to realize that NUS/UNE is only as strong as the students'

support makes it and only as wise as the representatives of those students.

There are other considerations for the operation of the national organization, and of course the various considerations that we see to be important are inter-related and overlapping. Almost as important as the on-campus presence is the flow of information that NUS/UNE provides and facilitates. This consists partly in providing student unions with information on current issues and events. Another element of information flow is making available information about the many on-campus activities and organizations that are common in Canadian post-secondary institutions. Constitutions, course unions, student representation, soliciting advertisement, etc. are such common activities. The CUS Student Government Research Service once provided this information, and restoration of this service has always been high on the list of projects for NUS/UNE to tackle.

Of equal importance is the research carried on by NUS/UNE. By research we mean investigation of an issue or field of activity which not only produces a review and commentary but makes some new contribution to the issue's development - NUS/UNE's independent thought. Research is essential to the development of policies and strategies that will be of maximum effectiveness. It enables careful evaluation of stands taken by government and other organizations and it backs up action by other student organizations as well as by NUS/UNE. Few student unions are able to conduct research on an ongoing basis. This is accordingly one of the most important priorities for NUS/UNE as a source of pooled student resources.

In addition to research there is monitoring federal government activity and liaison with federal officials. Only NUS/UNE can do this for Canadian students, and it will always be a significant part of the organization's work.

Some have at times expressed concern that in co-ordinating the work of provincial organizations and individual student unions NUS/UNE may be sacrificing its own performance. In an extreme case this may be true but regardless of the outcome of restructuring there is no real basis for competition between NUS/UNE and those organizations that it helps co-ordinate. Each serves all or part of the student population, and as the national organization NUS/UNE has a major responsibility to ensure that the provincial and other organizations are co-ordinated nationally for the benefit of Canadian students.

A further consideration for NUS/UNE must be its own self-management. All reasonable efforts should be made to use resources as efficiently as possible. The time spent on superficially "bureaucratic" work pays off in long term ability to serve students without the headaches of poor internal control.

Other priorities for the national organization will be the continued growth in membership and liaison with other organizations in Canada and with other students in the rest of the world.

We feel that the newly established NUS/UNE should be concerned primarily with on-campus activity and presence, information flow and research. It should also monitor the federal government, co-ordinate student action, manage itself, continue to grow and develop external relations.

That is a rather abstract statement, since the priority among issues and campaigns must be determined largely by you, the delegates. Nevertheless, it is necessary to keep in mind the kind of organization through which Canadian students will work together.

Staff

Another vantage point for the building of a national organization is the role of executive, staff and volunteer effort. Those who founded NUS/UNE felt that, while there is no fully acceptable formula for this side of organization, the members should have virtually unlimited power and day-to-day work should be done by full-time employees with executive direction. We see no reason to change this "labour intensive" use of NUS/UNE resources, and our recommendations on staff are based upon the assumption that such use will continue.

The other assumption at the base of our staff recommendations is that in 1976-77 NUS/UNE resources will be quite limited, although substantial. The luxury of highly specialized staff positions cannot be afforded, and it will be essential that the employees based in the Ottawa office work as a team to use their skills in support of each other. Each person will have a job description of primary duties, but much of the office work (eg. typing, translation, filing, drafting reports) must be shared on the basis acceptable to those employees.

Suggesting descriptions for the office positions was especially difficult due to the limited resources and many expectations. On the reliable assumption that the position of Executive Secretary will not be abolished, whoever holds that job will continue to look after contact with the Central Committee, regular correspondence with the members and other duties that are appropriate at any particular time.

We agree with Don Thompson's recommendation that a comptroller-like position be created for internal control on finances. It is not likely that the financial work will itself be full-time in 1976-77 so the position seems to need a more general title, such as internal co-ordinator. This does not mislead applicants and leaves the flexibility needed for filling positions and working in the office.

The other positions that we feel to be necessary - researcher and information co-ordinator - are dictated by the considerations that we have outlined in the priorities section of our report.

Looking at the need for fieldwork in the various parts of the country, and thinking of the fieldworker's role as NUS/UNE's most visible representative, we recommend that approximately half of the staff in 1976-77 be fieldworkers. As the Treasurer's Report indicates, it should be possible to have eight full-time employees from August 1. If four of them are to be fieldworkers, need and geographic realities indicate the Atlantic, Ontario, Prairies and British Columbia as logical regions for fieldwork assignment.

Many details of a fieldworker's role in a region are best decided by that person, but some questions about that role concern us. To develop a useful knowledge of the region's campuses and to have working relations with student leaders it is necessary for a fieldworker to be assigned to a particular region for a set period of time. Such assignment also means that the fieldworker can have currently unusual benefits like weekends at home. However, the fieldworker is there as employee and representative of NUS/UNE. Regional assignments for lengthy periods hold the danger that fieldworkers will begin to serve regional interests to the exclusion of national considerations.

It will always be difficult to balance the central and regional ties of a fieldworker, and perhaps one can only be conscious of the difficulty. We feel that much of the problem can be eliminated with "centralizing" influences such as hiring through the Central Committee, not a regional committee; a week in the Ottawa office once every six to eight weeks; some national duties such as back-up for a standing committee and preparation of conference documents. The next Central Committee will have to be alert to trends in the development of the regional fieldwork system if you, the delegates, agree to establishment of such a system.

Regional offices

The development of CUS over its 43 years and the operation of other national student organizations make it obvious that regional offices are a fairly standard aspect of student unionism. There are parts of the country where NUS/UNE is the only organization in a position to open an office for students' common work (other than AOSC). Accordingly we asked whether in 1976-77 NUS/UNE should open one or more regional offices.

Some of the organization's work is more effectively done with regional offices, eg. fieldwork, application of research, co-ordination of activity. We are not certain how much more effective NUS/UNE would be with regional offices since there is so little direct experience from which to judge. Two factors make it clear that regardless of desirability, now is not the time to start regional offices.

One of these factors is that the restructuring process and staff co-operation between the various organizations may decide this matter over the coming year. The other is that our own experience shows that unless an office has at least three people it is not workable in the long run. NUS/UNE had unworkably small offices as it began to develop, but that was a short-run problem and the early enthusiasm for any organization compensated for some of the deficiencies. At this stage, when NUS/UNE is becoming a more established organization, the need for regional offices is not urgent and the sacrifice of efficiency not necessary. NUS/UNE should be open to the possibility of establishing offices in co-operation with other organizations when such a proposal seems feasible in terms of both the proposed office's efficiency and NUS/UNE operations.

Your role in these decisions

We, as Central Committee, manage and administer NUS/UNE subject to the direction of the NUS/UNE members. This meeting is the occasion for you to direct the 1976-77 Central Committee on the questions of what kind of national union there will be. The bulk of that direction will come in the form of recommendations on the various policies and issues. However, the internal matters such as those we have discussed above need your consideration, and we recommend that the major vehicle for that consideration be a finance committee of this conference. It would be composed of two members elected at large during the opening plenary session and one representative each from the Atlantic, Central and Western regions, chosen during their first caucus session the opening day.

While most of this committee's work will be to review financial statements and redraft the budget, that work must be based upon some sense of prevailing sentiment about the future national union development. This should be provided by

a workshop on organizational growth and by attendance and participation by interested delegates at finance committee meetings.

It is our hope that such a finance committee can become a regular feature of NUS/UNE conferences, to ensure comprehensive and democratic participation in the budgetary aspects of NUS/UNE decisions. Such committees would exist only during the particular conference at which they are chosen.

THE PAST YEAR

The phrase "crisis of rising expectations" has more meaning for us after spending 1975-76 on the NUS/UNE Central Committee. The referendums demonstrated strength, yet the delay in results for NUS/UNE meant that the strength would not be put to full use. Approximately 60 per cent of revenue was still from members on the 30 cents fee scale and much of the balance was grants. The past year was one which will not be repeated. The strains of the year have made it difficult to be objective about NUS/UNE's activities so please bear with this attempt to report on 1975-76.

Most work done by NUS/UNE prior to our term of office has continued, often on a larger scale. Informational mail-outs; support for provincial and campus actions; fieldwork; responses to requests for information — all increased. It was not possible to conduct a national campaign, unfortunately, and we were unable to meet regularly due to the extremely limited resources. Some of the more prominent aspects of the last year are discussed in this section, with conclusions reached where appropriate.

National Co-ordination

Students in every province responded actively and capably to the sharply more regressive government policies on post-secondary education, eg. the FAS/FEA fight against the 11% ceiling, P.E.I.'s battle on fees and employment, U. of Manitoba's opposition to tuition increases. There was considerable activity around all of the issues that have been identified as ones of common concern to Canadian students — tuition increases and spending cutbacks; foreign students; student government autonomy; housing; summer employment.

Local and provincial efforts received NUS/UNE back-up to varying extents. They benefitted from momentum NUS/UNE had helped to establish, from the exchange of ideas at national conferences. The inability to mount a national common effort meant that events could only go so far, but perhaps it is best to look at one issue and one province as examples.

The New Brunswick student aid campaign suffered from the absence of a national campaign and fully staffed national office. NUS/UNE had provided background support on the student aid issue in that province since September 1974. Through AFS/FEA New Brunswick student unions participated in the national student aid campaign. Fieldwork in August, September, November and early January concentrated on the student aid issue.

When events were coming to a climax in late January the nearest Central Committee member and fieldworker were trying to cope with five Nova Scotia referendums being held over two and a half weeks. The office had been closed several days to free staff for simultaneous Ontario referendums. Before the office worker could get back to regular duties the second New Brunswick occupation began and an on-the-spot presence was essential.

There was someone from NUS/UNE in Fredericton for several days, trying to help the campuses that were not yet fully involved plus passing along the request

of the occupation that student support in other provinces become more active. Work was done and the response elsewhere was excellent, especially from OFS/FEO. (That organization deserves special tribute for the hazardous trip taken by Ontario representatives to join the occupation.)

However, just as pre-occupation support had been necessarily sporadic and often distant, so was much of the support after the office reopened. There was no one from NUS/UNE in Fredericton and there was little time available to keep student unions elsewhere updated on developments. This is not a complaint, but it was impossible to handle so much happening all at once.

Many student newspapers gave the New Brunswick occupation front page coverage, many student unions gave moral and financial support, NUS/UNE gave considerable support, but that student aid effort and all others were isolated. There were no resources for a national campaign, so there was no national activity to which New Brunswick could contribute momentum and from which New Brunswick could draw long term support. That was the most spectacular student aid effort, but every province acted, causing similar frustration for those within NUS/UNE.

Something was happening across the country as governments settled into a new approach to student aid. The process in governmental policy that began in 1975-76 to be implemented will continue. Again we urge that this conference consider the ways in which resources now available in NUS/UNE are to be used for the most effective national effort possible.

Diversity in NUS/UNE membership

This past year was one in which the diversity of our active membership forced re consideration of what has been some fundamental attitudes in NUS/UNE operation. A program or policy tailored to the university undergraduate is no longer good enough for general application. Channels of participation designed for the medium and large sized student union may well bar participation for smaller student governments.

Beginnings have been made, with fieldwork starting to help smaller campuses; conference subsidization for small-budgeted members; some additional funding for the college committee chairperson over the usual expense allowance given Central Committee members. There is much more to be done along these lines, but it will succeed only if there is a changed attitude towards diverse treatment of diverse members.

To recognize the diversity in NUS/UNE membership is to permit more open divisions between the groupings of members. That risk should be taken, for either all post-secondary students have enough common interests to warrant a common organization or post-secondary students should belong to a variety of autonomous national organizations. It is not likely that NUS/UNE membership will ever be a mirror image of the total student population. However, it is quite feasible for NUS/UNE to have as members a significant proportion of all major groups of post-secondary students, and to provide for the unique needs of each group.

There is much more to be done for the graduate, part-time, technical, and community college students who belong to NUS/UNE. During the next year some thought should be given also to ways in which the professional student members can be better served through recognition of their diverse needs.

Referenda

The box score of the referenda is excellent. Twenty-nine were held, of which twenty-four were successful, two produced a positive majority but missed quorum, two were defeats. A more extensive analysis shows that of the five unsuccessful referenda, three were at the largest Western universities. This was a concern, due to their size and the fact that these institutions were leaders in the effort to create NUS/UNE.

On two of those campuses the draconian methods used for the special financing of NUS/UNE provided opponents with a handy issue. All three pro campaigns suggested from problems common to student government at large institutions. A final factor was NUS/UNE's inability to use its own resources for sustained contact with campuses, leaving the impetus with admittedly inexperienced local committees at these three institutions.

In every referendum the degree of success appeared to be in direct relation to the degree of personal contact with students on the campus. Thus, the smaller campuses tended to vote by more decisive margins in favour of joining. The experience gained in the referenda says that classroom and residence speaking, forums, etc. are essential to truly inform students, to get a message across and to discover enough about students' opinions for a response to them. This lesson should be applied more widely than to next year's referenda.

Provincial organizations

The provincial/regional student organizations fall into two general categories when one reviews their development during 1975-76.

The Ontario Federation of Students (OFS/FEO) and the Atlantic Federation of Students (AFS/FEA) achieved a stable membership base before the 1975-76 academic year and new members were not a high priority. Each of these organizations has, therefore, been testing its potential and in that process discovering by experience the limitations of its current size and method of operation. Both OFS/FEO and AFS/FEA appear to have (in most instances) fulfilled the expectations of their members.

The other provincial organizations — the Association nationale des étudiants du Québec (ANEQ), the Federation of Alberta Students (FAS/FEA) and the British Columbia Students' Federation (BCSF) — have been in a developmental state, with much of their energy devoted to preliminary efforts and growth in membership. All three have experienced problems, as does any new organization. It appears that they have remained credible to the majority of students in their prospective provinces and are on the way to stability and achievement.

There are plans for reactivating the Manitoba Federation of Students and perhaps even the Saskatchewan Association of Students will emerge once more.

NUS/UNE has been able to assist the more recent provincial organizations in their development, and to provide some national context for the work of most. The other side of this coin is that the existence of provincial organizations facilitates all forms of common work by students, thus assisting NUS/UNE's great deal. The developments of 1975-76 show that willingness of post-secondary students to work together is a quality which either applies to provincial and national work or not at all.

Relations with Canadian University Press

Background documents illustrate how CUP and the national student organization have traditionally co-operated extensively. This co-operation is now being continued. Once again the two organizations' offices are adjacent and by sharing resources each is able to achieve economies in its operation.

So long as the independence of CUP is not undermined by co-operation with NUS/UNE we welcome co-operation with that organization.

Research

The growth in membership forced temporary suspension of the full-time office position, Research Secretary. Elsewhere we have recommended restoration of research on an ongoing basis through establishment of a researcher position, which could begin on July 1.

The seven-month suspension of most ongoing research means that the background documents prepared for this conference are the research documents that it has been possible to produce since the October general meeting. They are no inconsequential by any means, but full-time researcher in a more fully staffed office promises much better for the future.

NUS/UNE publications

It proved to be impossible for the first issue of the Student Advocate to be published during the winter term. To have done so required manpower and co-ordination with provincial organizations that was not practically possible. This was a severe disappointment to those responsible for producing the first issue but they felt that it was preferable to have an excellent first issue in September than a small, mediocre first issue in March.

Response to the newspaper was quite positive and the bare minimum for circulation should be 50,000. We recommend that the concept of the newspaper continue to receive support. It should have six issues each academic year: September, October, November, January, February and March. Day-to-day editorial responsibilities should remain with the Ottawa office. Direct costs of publication should be paid for by the subscribing student unions while indirect and staff costs are paid out of NUS/UNE fees.

A national newspaper plays two important roles, as we see it. One of these is that students receive direct communication about the issues and events that are of common concern. The newspaper is a visible and concrete sign of the ties between Canadian post-secondary students. It can be a unique source of information. Fulfilling that first role well also fills the second — maintaining awareness of the common organizations and their necessity.

NUS/UNE should have a second organization, the NUS/UNE Newsletter. Lack of resources meant highly irregular publication and limited circulation for the newsletter in past years. There is a place for it, and now there are resources. We recommend that the newsletter be written for those who are active in student affairs, providing a summary of governmental and student activity. It would be

a digest of external events for those student activists whose focus is not on external matters.

If you agree with this kind of publication, we recommend that it should be provided free of charge to member associations, the quantity determined by a formula which took into account the size of the campus and number of active student association positions. Additional copies for members and all but one copy for non-members would be sold on the same basis as the newspaper. A publishing schedule could be: September, October, November, December, January, February, March, April, July.

Should two regular publications such as we have described be established, changes in the printing and mailing of other materials can be introduced. The memos, letters, reports, etc. that are now mailed regularly to members and friends would be sent only to members and prospective members. (The number of those receiving these materials has increased over 80% in one year and shows no signs of stopping.) Friends and other student unions would receive a copy of important documents, or they could subscribe to receive full mailing service at cost price. Additional copies of reports would be printed for sale to student unions that wished to distribute them on campus.

The need for more than two periodic publications may soon arise. If it does, we recommend that as long as the principles of the budget are adhered to NUS/UNE facilitate production of periodic newsletters for groups of post-secondary students who want such help.

Incorporation

The titanic struggle to become incorporated and have a constitution compatible with that incorporation has been completed. The draft by-laws approved by the members at the October 1975 general meeting were given approval by the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs on November 19, 1975. They and the major provisions of the letters patent are now the NUS/UNE constitution.

Canadian students have formed organizations to achieve by common effort what cannot be achieved individually. These organizations are a way of pooling resources to serve the campus, provincial or national student population.

The activities of a students' organization (pub, student aid campaign, newspaper, . . .) are judged by students on the degree to which that particular activity appears to serve students. In this sense a student organization does nothing but provide services — long term ones such as a more egalitarian society, short term ones such as next week's movie.

Provincial and national student organization in the 1970s has been sparked by changes in government policy. Hence, the service most desired is channelling of student views to affect government decision-making — a political activity (although not a partisan one). Nothing indicates that this purpose will be less important in the foreseeable future.

While the most important activity will be a political one, other activity by the organizations has not been excluded. Much of their work is advice and assistance for student governments, so that student governments can, in turn, better serve students.

A third type of activity, provision of goods or services that students must otherwise obtain from private business, has traditionally been called "services" by those in student government. That is the kind of service which this paper will discuss.

A philosophical framework

When some level(s) of student organization can offer students a particular good or service at preferable quality or price, a potential student service exists. For example, one can improve considerably advantages to the student consumer by designing and operating the particular service for students. Replacing profit motive with a service motive may lead to lower prices.

By such methods students use numbers and collective buying power for their self-interest. As a group in society students gain additional control over their lives, become less dependent upon other groups and interests.

It is to be hoped that in operating services a student organization will be more enlightened than the majority of private operators. However, that has more to do with the policies and attitudes of the student organization than with the rationale for offering services.

It is a legitimate and acceptable activity for a student organization to, when it can improve quality or prices, offer students a good or service that would

otherwise be obtained from private business. The priorities of the student organization will determine acceptable levels of surplus or deficit for such services; the amount of time and energy that is devoted to services.

A dangerous and invalid argument about involvement in services is that they enable some campuses to join and participate in provincial/national student affairs despite opposition to current political goals or methods. There will always be minorities among the members and it is on-going debate within the student organizations which ensures that goals and methods are in tune with student views. Unfortunately, the argument stated above encourages an attitude that provincial/national student organizations are a source of purchased services, political or otherwise, rather than seeing membership in these organizations as a commitment to work in common with students elsewhere for the mutual benefit of Canadian post-secondary students.

Discussion at previous NUS/UNE conferences has demonstrated a willingness that this organization move towards involvement in national student services. The subsequent sections will bring you up to date on developments in this area.

Travel

The first service offered by a common organization of Canadian campuses was travel. Since 1927 Canadian students' organizations have conducted travel programs designed for post-secondary students.

From the mid 1950s that service operated as a separate department of the national student organization, with its own office and staff. As the Canadian Union of Students collapsed in 1969 Ontario and Atlantic student unions incorporated the Association of Student Councils (AOSC) to carry on the work in travel. Continuity of staff and operation was preserved. The bankruptcy of Western Student Services, Inc. led the B.C. student unions to give AOSC their support.

Meanwhile, in 1972 OFS/FEO and NUS/UNE were reformed to begin filling the vacuum of provincial and national student activities. The development of student organization after 1972 has clearly established that the majority of Canadian students again support strong common effort at the provincial and national levels.

One of those events was approval last October by the NUS/UNE membership of co-operation and eventual merger with AOSC. The approval was regarded as an expression of desire for re-establishment of a full range of mutually supportive national student activities.

AOSC had found that, as an independent organization without membership fees, it is less and less able to keep in close contact with student opinion and wishes on the campus. It is difficult to respond to members when those members know little or nothing about the organization. People in AOSC were open to the concept of rejoining national students' organization, and NUS/UNE was willing to move towards services. (The growth of NUS/UNE meant that many student unions now belong to both organizations.)

Co-operation between the two organizations has been increasing. To guide preparation of a detailed proposal for merger the Central Committee approved in principle three elements of a merger as listed below.

The elements are based on two guides for the process of co-operation and merger. One is that travel and similar national student services can benefit students over the long run only if they are part of a larger strong national organization. The other is that such services should have considerable autonomy so that their principles of operation do not pervade the larger organization, weakening it; and so that the larger organization does not impose unworkable goals or methods on the services, thus destroying them.

A. NUS/UNE and AOSC will enter a relationship of umbrella organization and subsidiary corporation; the subsidiary to have a separate board of directors and autonomous day-to-day operation.

B. The AOSC board will have a mixed composition of elected and appointed members. The elections will be held at a meeting of members' delegates held to deal with AOSC matters. (eg. One possible composition is an elected representative from the Atlantic, Ontario, Prairies and British Columbia plus three NUS/UNE appointees.)

C. With the aim of a merged membership, those student unions which are presently members of AOSC but not of NUS/UNE would (for a grace period of perhaps two years) have a special status in NUS/UNE which maintained their rights as AOSC members, eg. voting. These unions would become regular NUS/UNE members only by the current referendum method. Current regular NUS/UNE members would become AOSC members at no additional charge. At the end of the grace period a student union would have participation in AOSC affairs only through regular NUS/UNE membership, although of course AOSC could continue to do business with whomever it wished.

There is much more to be done in this field. A May 7 meeting of the AOSC Board of Directors will have dealt with the matter by the time of this conference. Even if they are generally agreeable, preparation of the proposal to implement merger may be time-consuming. Still, a beginning has been made.

Insurance

(It must be noted that a great deal of the work done to prepare for possible insurance services has been carried out by AOSC and OPS/FEO.)

Student insurance has always been an attractive business proposition because it offers:

- . the ability to economize through mass marketing
- . a large captive market
- . "first grabs" on the future upper income group

This attractiveness creates two reasons for student organizations to offer insurance. The predominant reason is ability to provide better or cheaper insurance for Canadian post-secondary students by operating insurance plans for students' benefit rather than for private gain. A second reason is that insurance plans producing a small surplus can thereby contribute to general revenues and operations. An insurance proposal that achieves neither purpose should be rejected out of hand. One that achieves little of the first reason is not very desirable either.

Types of insurance

There are many types of insurance for which post-secondary students are actual or potential customers. These include health care, accident, drug, life and auto. Each has its own degree of cost to operate, potential for compulsory or voluntary policies, province-to-province variation in conditions, etc.

The most promising type seems to be health-accident-drug plans. Several insurance companies are aggressively selling such plans to student unions or administrations for compulsory student membership in the plan. In most provinces there is still considerable need for such plans, especially if birth control drugs are included. To judge from the private activity this type of insurance is financially feasible and it is possible to have students join a plan individually if compulsion is unsuitable.

Life insurance has been the traditional backbone of student insurance efforts, because fast and profitable growth results from the conversion of professional school graduates' student life plans into regular life plans. Life insurance is of such slight benefit to the purchaser that it deserves a lower priority, especially in view of the need for people to sell the policies.

Other forms of insurance are rarely sold on a group basis, so at this stage it is difficult to comment on the viability of offering them through student organizations.

Structures for insurance service

There appear to be three distinct structures for providing insurance.

A) The simplest is co-operating with an insurance company or agency to develop a plan which they provide under our name(s), with a degree of control and profit resting with the student organizations. This was the method used for the NFCUS (then CUS) Life Plan. It made Canadian Premier Life Insurance a healthy company and gave CUS fairly small financial returns but considerable visibility as a service source. In the long run this method offers only the absence of risk. In the short run it provides quick and easy entry into the insurance field. One year contracts with the insurer would leave the option of transferring fairly smoothly to other methods.

B) The second method is for the student organizations to become or establish an insurance agency (either alone or in co-operation with an existing agency). The students would be insured by an existing insurance company through this agency. The agency would develop and distribute the insurance plans. This would result in greater risk and greater financial return (if there was any) but it also involves the expense of establishing that agency. There is more student control and it would be quite easy to shift from a private insurance company to a student owned and controlled insurance company.

C) The third method is, of course, the student insurance company. The prime model for this is NUS (England and Wales), who bought an insurance company after about two years of operating an agency. They have built it into an impressive group of plans and are now one of England's major insurers. The company route offers maximum flexibility and control; eliminates all private gain at students' expense; adds directly to the size of the student organizations' operation. It also requires either considerable financial resources for a new company (about \$2,000,00

or the purchase price of an existing but inactive company (one estimate is \$750,000). The only source of funds which seems readily available is the sizeable assets of the major student unions. Those unions would have to be sold on this as a worthwhile investment. Although there is little financial responsibility for a subsidiary corporation there is considerable political and moral responsibility for it — more than in the case of farming out business to recognized "bad guys", private companies.

It takes much longer (at least a year) to put together a workable plan for a company of our own, and it is fairly clear from a past consultant's report that the investment and good will of an established insurance company would be necessary to provide both funds and experience for the first five to ten years.

For the long term this third method seems desirable, but to enter the field carefully and in a staged process one of the other two methods would be better suited to organizations' early involvement in insurance.

Can it work?

Four criteria have been suggested for assessing any proposed student insurance plan(s).

1. Can students receive a service of good quality?
2. What do students need; what do they want; what will they buy?
3. What is the cost of acquisition for the plan?
4. There will still be active competition from other insurers, can it be met?

Those criteria need investigation, but also needed is sufficient strength in the student organizations to withstand two to five years of loss or break-even returns on an insurance service. Student unions should realize from the start that the early stages will be difficult; that they must persevere until a stable level of operation is reached.

This conference is the one which is asked to decide whether NUS/UNE proceeds at all, and which establishes initial direction for involvement in insurance. More urgent, the work being done by OFS/FEO may make it feasible for a trial run of student insurance plans to be offered (in co-operation with established insurers) for the 1976-77 year. Can the Central Committee and staff investigate the potential for a trial run in co-operation with OFS/FEO, and approve it should that seem advisable.

Entertainment

A student-controlled organization to provide advisory and booking services for the entertainment programming of student governments — this is a long cherished dream of Canadian student unions. Fifteen months ago hopes were high. Several student governments which are heavily involved in entertainment programming expressed a commitment to the establishment of a student programming conference which would be controlled by the schools. There was a good possibility that this new organization

could, through affiliation with the United States based National Entertainment Conference (a school-controlled organization), offer its members automatic membership in NEC.

It proved hard to co-ordinate action by the widely scattered supporters of this plan, and so despite the initial excitement it ran into organizational difficulties. An Ontario region conference was held in May 1975 but by the fall of 1975 many student programmers were expressing fear that the new organization was about to fall prey to the domination by private commercial interests which has so hindered common work on entertainment services by Canadian student governments.

The incorporation of a federal non-share capital company proceeded, and at the 1975 Canadian Entertainment Conference (not a student-controlled enterprise) first directors were chosen. By-laws were to be prepared and sent to all student unions.

At the October 1975 NUS/UNE conference many student representatives expressed apprehension that the new organization would perpetuate most faults of the CEC. A committee was established to review the by-laws, advise student unions on the by-laws' meaning and assist student unions to maintain control over the still vaguely defined new organization.

The mail strike, unfulfilled expectations and rivalries took their toll. Draft by-laws have yet to appear. The host institution of the new organization's first conference (University of Waterloo Federation of Students) indicated that the conference as planned would not take place. NUS/UNE had no resources to pick up the ball.

The brief chronology outlined above illustrates the many pitfalls of involvement in entertainment programming as a provincial or national service. It requires much time and energy. Extreme caution must be taken to avoid becoming ensnared in the ceaseless suspicion about entertainment industry corruption. There has to be enough expertise in entertainment programming to avoid blind reliance on "experts".

A full student entertainment service will of necessity be a large and complex organization, regardless of its dependence or independence of other organizations. A realistic appraisal of NUS/UNE's role in 1976-77 is that on its own initiative this organization can only conduct tentative investigation of the potential for entering entertainment programming services. It will be easier and riskier to observe and co-operate with other efforts to establish such a service. Past decisions have set forth a role for NUS/UNE to try and help safeguard interests of its member campuses in national and provincial entertainment activity. How acceptable and practical is this role?