

Canadian Federation of Students(-Services)
National General Meetingg
May 1992

REPORT

NATIONAL DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON



**REPORT
NATIONAL DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON
Canadian Federation of Students(-Services)
May 24 - 30, 1992
National General Meeting**

General Comments

This is my last report to the membership. It has been a crazy year to say the least; there is so much going on in Canada that is related to government education policies, the Constitution, the Prosperity Initiative, changes to the Canada Student Loans Programme, the list goes on. The Federation has produced a record number of campaigns and has made substantial improvements to many of our existing programmes. The following is a brief report of my activities as National Deputy Chairperson from the November national general meeting until the present.

The following is a list of meetings and major events I have attended and/or worked on since the last general meeting:

Action Canada Network National Assembly (November 28 - 30, 1991)
Towards a People's Agenda Conference (December 1 - 3, 1991)
Labour Management Committee (December 4 & 5, 1991)
Cuba "Student to Student" Exchange, Cuba (December 28, 1991 - January 12, 1992)
International Union of Students Congress (January 20 - 25, 1992)
National Executive Meeting (January 31, 1992 - February 3, 1992)
Travel Cuts Board of Directors Meetings (February 5, 1992, May 4, 1992 and May 21, 1992)
Federation Atlantic Region Meeting (January 7 - 9, 1992)
Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women (March 27, 1992)
Cuba "Student to Student" Exchange, Ottawa & Montreal (April 28 - May 3, 1992)
National Executive Sub-Committee on Management Structures in Canadian Federation of Students-Services (May 7 - 8, 1992)
National Executive Meeting (May 22 & 23, 1992)

I participated in the Federation's responses to the federal budget and Challenge '92 announcements as well as general lobbying and the regular media work that is required of the Ottawa office. I was a member of the hiring committees for the following positions: Internal Coordinator, Translator, and Summer Researcher. I also spent three weeks in British Columbia leading up to the Simon Fraser Student Society referendum working the Federation's campaign.

Aside from these specific things, a large portion of my time was consumed coordinating the Canadian delegation to Cuba, where I participated in preliminary meetings about SWAP Cuba, and then later organizing the Cuban delegation's stay in Canada. I also spent a great amount of necessary time attending office meetings and participating in some of the collective duties in the Ottawa office and paying a few visits to the

Toronto office. Over the past year I also served as staff relations officer. In this capacity I participated in the final round of collective agreement negotiations with the National Executive's unionized staff. I also participated in Labour Management Committee meetings and performed other staff relations duties.

It has become apparent, to me anyway, that the time has come to create more full-time salaried elected positions. Our Federation has fewer full-time elected positions than most other national student unions in the world. The creation of a full time Treasurer will help greatly, as this person would be able to spend equal amounts of time in both head offices, but I also believe strongly that the Federation needs a full time elected person in the Toronto office to oversee the operations of the various programmes. The creation of this position for the Toronto office would free up some of the Deputy Chair's time, which right now is overloaded with all the international work, programmes, Travel Cuts as well as the usual lobbying, media and overseeing production of all materials from the Ottawa office and a great deal from the Toronto office and the head office of Travel Cuts, helping to oversee the work of an expanded staff component in Ottawa, Toronto and in the field, combined with all the other administrative tasks that are required of the job. It clearly is too much work for one person, and as a result I felt myself burn out earlier than I had expected this year. If the Federation membership is going to continue to demand the amount of work that it currently does from its at - large officers, the time has come to make the Treasurer's position full-time and to seriously consider creating at least one more full time position for the Toronto office.

There are other things that I had hoped to have time to finish this year: the creation of a National Executive Operations Manual, an updated list of international organizations, an international mailout of Federation materials, and by-law updates for Travel Cuts – to name a few. But as the year progressed I realized it would be impossible to do nothing other than what is absolutely required. A one year mandate is really not long enough to accomplish a lot, I think we should look at amending our by-laws to include two year terms for the three at -large officers at least.

Federation Programmes

The following are brief highlights from the various programmes the Federation offers. A more precise account of each of the Federation's programmes is contained in the National Executive and Federation Annual reports and members will have a chance to learn more about the programmes at the workshop which will be held during the general meeting.

Studentsaver

Studentsaver continues to be Canada's largest discount programme providing students with thousands of discounts each year. This year the programme expansion into high schools in the Toronto area was very successful. This expansion has provided the programme with more income and the National Executive predicts that the programme will be operational in high schools in almost every major city within a few years.

We also made huge improvements in the environmentally friendliness of the programme last summer. The guidebooks and all materials produced by the Federation for inclusion in the envelope were printed on recycled paper and we offered discounts to advertisers who did the same.

The National Executive approved a new format for the presentation of Studentsaver for this upcoming academic year, a book instead of an envelope with the Federation membership card on the cover.

Studentsaver decals will still be available for those member locals who wish to use them.

Student Work Abroad Programme (SWAP)

Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Germany are new SWAP destinations for this summer. We recently found out that External Affairs has also approved the idea of a SWAP Cuba. This programme will start next summer with a limited number of participants. Student and Youth organizations in Costa Rica, The Netherlands and Jamaica have approached the Federation inquiring about the possibility of setting up programmes with their countries. It is expected that 1500 students will participate in SWAP this summer; this number is down from last year as a result of the recession, but many students seem interested in the new destinations.

The National Executive has been attempting to set up a hosting fund for students coming from Eastern European destinations. As these students do not have access to hard currency, the hosting fund will offer them loans to get them going for their first few weeks in Canada. This will be discussed more throughout the course of the meeting, as the National Executive attempts to solicit financial support from member locals to get the fund off the ground.

Canadian Programming Service (CPS)

The Federation signed on some new and exciting speakers to the CPS roster this year. Lilian Allen, dub poet and activist, Michael Kaufman, founder of the White Ribbon campaign, and John Martin the Director of Programming at Much Music to name a few. An organizing manual to help assist student associations organize a speaking event on campus is being produced.

Health and Dental Plans

This past year the Federation introduced a voluntary dental plan. Presently over 1000 students use the plan. Programmes committee will discuss how to proceed with expansion and marketing of the plan during the general meeting.

CFSnet

The use of the net has dropped sharply among member locals as well as among members of the National Executive. The fate of the net will be decided during the course of the general meeting.

Although the Federation offers all these programmes, some of which are exclusive to members, the use of these programmes by members is not as high as it should be. Some member locals continue to book speakers through other agencies, and offer non-Federation health plans to their students this is a problem that needs to be addressed. Programmes committee, as well as membership development and communications, should attempt to find more effective ways to encourage the membership to use the programmes.

International Work

The National Executive took on a fair amount of international work this past year. The following is an overview

of that work. The Federation's international involvement has opened the way for us to become involved in the various struggles of students around the world, as well as enabled us to share research, campaigns, publications and programme development with over 120 student organizations worldwide. As educational and social policy continue to be a major part of global trends towards "freer trade" and "economic unions", our international involvement can only benefit us as we work cooperatively with other national student organizations.

International Union of Students

In January 1992 the Federation was accepted as a full member of the International Union of Students at its 16th Congress. Myself and Zonny Woods (University of Winnipeg) attended the Congress as representatives of the Federation. This was the first Congress since the IUS underwent massive constitutional changes. Although the Congress itself was a bit unorganized as old and new members wrangled with an unfamiliar constitution, we did manage to lay out plans of action for all of the various thematic platforms and divisions of the IUS. It was very disappointing to see that less than ten percent of the approx. 250 delegates to the Congress were women. It was even more disappointing to see some of the national student organisations from Europe who had fought so hard at the last IUS Congress for women's rights and representation to bring only male delegates. The first challenge that the IUS will face will be negotiating with the government of Czechoslovakia, where the IUS headquarters are located, to allow the IUS to stay in the country. The government of Czechoslovakia has been flipflopping with its decision to ask the IUS to move its activities elsewhere. The Executive Secretariat will try once again to change the decision and if we are unsuccessful, it will be a difficult decision as to where to move.

I was elected to the Executive Secretariat to serve as head of the Division for Women's Rights and Equality. Over the next four years the Division will be planning five regional women's meetings leading up to one international meeting before the next Congress, to address issues such as women's rights, representation and participation. We will publish a Women's Newsletter which Federation members will receive, as well as an organizing manual for women students.

The new Executive Secretariat is comprised of representatives from the national student organizations in the following countries:

President - India

General Secretary - South Africa

Treasurer - Nicaragua

Regional Secretary for Africa - Ghana

Regional Secretary for Asia and Pacific - Bangladesh

Regional Secretary for Europe, North America and other industrial countries - Germany

Regional Secretary for Latin America and Caribbean - Cuba

Regional Secretary for Middle East and Arab Region - Syria

Division of Education - Papua New Guinea

Division of Women's Rights and Equality - Canada

Division of Press Information and Communication - Niger

Division of Contacts with International and Regional Organizations - Palestine

The IUS will be hiring to fill some of the staff positions left vacant after the Congress. This information will be sent to members of the Federation as it is available.

Other major areas of work that the IUS will take on between now and the next Congress include: education policies and the globalization of education, privatization and how free trade and economic unions impact on education, education accessibility and student rights in the developing world, campaigns around illiteracy and solidarity work with student struggles around the world. When the final information is available from the Congress it will be mailed out to members of the Federation.

Canada - Cuba "Student to Student" Exchange

In December 1991, I accompanied ten other Canadian students to Cuba for a two week stay as part of the First ever student exchange between Canadian and Cuban students organised by the Federation. The Federation participated in this exchange with the United States Student Association (USSA) and the Federacion Estudiantil Universitaria (FEU), the Cuban national student organisation. This exchange was first organised by the USSA and FEU, and our Federation became involved through our connections with other IUS members. The USSA first proposed the project as a way of getting more American students involved in the protest against the 30 year-old American embargo against Cuba. The participants paid for their own airfare, and all costs while in Cuba were assumed by FEU. While in Cuba, I participated in meetings with FEU regarding the possibility of setting up a SWAP Cuba. I also met with representatives from the Organisation of Continental and Latin American students (Oclaé) to discuss increased cooperation between our two organizations.

While in Cuba, the programme included meetings with the Cuban Women's Federation, visits to university campuses and meetings with students, the young communists associations, the younger artists association, the minister of higher education and a deputy from the national assembly, family doctors, community groups, a daycare centre, a hospital. The exchange was a very educational experience for all those involved. We were able to learn about Cuba first-hand without the biases of western journalism. In April 1992, the second half of the exchange took place in Ottawa and Montreal when four student representatives of FEU came to Canada as part of their North American tour. Various activities were planned for their stay in Canada. The exchange with Cuba was a unique opportunity for the Federation to enhance cooperation with Cuba, and with other student groups from Latin America. I will be recommending to the membership that the Federation continue this project with the USSA and FEU and that we budget some money to help offset the costs of bringing Cuban students to Canada. Canadian participants can afford to pay for their own flights by fund raising etc., and FEU will continue to host us financially, but I think that the Canadian participants should pay a nominal fee say \$100.00, to help offset the costs of the programme.

Solidarity and other international work

The National Executive was approached by **Canadian Friends of Burma** to get involved with the struggle faced by Burmese students. In 1988, 3,000 students were murdered in Burma and most of the refugee camps on the border of Burma are populated by students. At its meeting in September, the National Executive passed a motion supporting in principle humanitarian aid funding to Burmese students and showing our solidarity with the students struggling for democracy and the right to education in Burma. We have participated in a few meetings of the Canadian Friends of Burma group since then.

The National Executive made a financial donation in the sum of \$220.00 to the **Asian Student Association (ASA)**. ASA's funds were wiped out when the bank of Credit and Commerce International closed in 1991. ASA has forty members from 25 countries. We had also invited a representative from ASA to this general

meeting to hold a workshop on the student movement in Asia, but she was unable to attend.

The National Executive voted to join the **Canadian Youth Network for Asia Pacific Solidarity (CYNAPS)** at a cost of \$50.00. We also made a donation of \$50.00 to help with the creation of a tabloid.

In January, the National Executive learned that the offices of the **Guatemalan national student organisation (AEU)** had been bombed. No one was killed or injured in the bombing, but their office was severely damaged. AEU has been experiencing harassment on a regular basis and two of their leaders have just recently been granted asylum in Canada and others have gone "missing". The Federation has sent numerous letters of support to AEU, to government officials in Guatemala and to External Affairs in Canada calling for a stop to the harassment. We continue to receive updates and continue to be in touch with the Organisation of Continental and Latin American Students (Oclaé).

Travel Cuts

Over the past year I have served as Chairperson of the Travel Cuts Board of Directors, the following is a brief overview of some of the activities of the company.

The Canadian Federation of Students-Services became the official owner of Travel Cuts in November 1991 during the general meeting. The Travel Cuts Board of Directors has held four meetings over the past year. The Board experienced a shift in directors. At the November Federation general meeting Marne Jensen and Greg Lutes were elected as membership representatives to the Board, and in May 1992 Joanne Taylor and Robert Keddy replaced Rob Becker and Cindy Fowler as Travel Cuts staff representatives. At this general meeting two new membership representatives will be elected to hold one year terms.

Overall, Travel Cuts has had a challenging year financially. As at March 31, 1992, the company was showing an overall operating loss of \$870,000 (\$310,00 over budget). Although, with the upturn in business traditionally experienced in the last quarter (April, May and June), the Travel Cuts president is confident that the company will show roughly a break even position at year end. The actual performance of the company before its financial obligations to its owner (Canadian Federation of Students-Services) is, therefore, predicted to be profitable. The analysis of the current financial situation of Travel Cuts given at the May 4, 1992 Board of Directors meeting was that students, and therefore the company, are finally experiencing the effects of the recession (mainly an eastern Canadian urban problem), in combination with the increased pricing competitiveness brought about by wide spread and constant seat sales offered directly by the carriers. April's figures came in on target (showing profit) and the Board predicts that the coming months will also meet budget projections.

The company has opened a few new offices over the past year, one in London and one in Toronto (the IATA license was transferred from an office in Edmonton, which was closed, to the new Toronto office). A new office was set up at York University, and the South Street office in Halifax was moved to Saint Mary's University, as a result of an unaffordable rent increase in the old office space. Thus far the office at Saint Mary's seems to be doing well. The new office in Toronto was opened in cooperation with Europebound. The Board discussed the possibility of opening a new office in France -- this option is currently being investigated.

At the last national general meeting, programmes committee recommended that Travel Cuts apply for funding to start a Domestic SWAP (Student Work Abroad Programme) and to produce a travel discount guide book,

but funding for both these two projects fell through. We were granted \$40,000 to start Domestic SWAP, but the announcement came too late to do anything for this summer and the grant was too little (an estimated \$200,000 was needed) to start this programme. The membership, programmes committee and the Aboriginal Students Constituency group also discussed the possibility of Travel Cuts assisting in the creation of a Native Travel Agency, but this project will not be proceeding at the current time for financial reasons.

The company was successful in negotiating student fares with Canadian Airlines, the second Canadian airline to offer students special prices. Important characteristics of these tickets for student travellers include a seven day advance booking, one way tickets, long duration stay and some of the lowest possible prices for air travel. As well, three agencies in Kingston and one in Newfoundland are selling these student fares for Travel Cuts. There is the possibility that this arrangement can be made with other travel companies that would enable students in areas where there is no Travel Cuts office to get the same low prices on tickets.

The issue of bilingualism within Travel Cuts was discussed by the Board at at least two of our meetings. Currently management is investigating and developing recommendations for the Board on issues such as hiring, advertising and operating policy to encourage French-speaking staff and services. Admittedly not much has been done on this issue for awhile, but Bilingualism remains a concern of the Board.

The National Executive needs to formalize a reporting process for Travel Cuts information, since it has always been rather haphazard. As well, the general meeting structure needs to be looked at to accommodate something like a Travel Cuts Shareholders meeting, where the Board would present a year end report and the membership could ask questions directly of members of the Board. This suggestion has been made before but nothing much has ever been done with it. Perhaps if the Organizational Development committee has time during this meeting, the members of the committee will make recommendations.

Summary of Recommendations

1. The creation of a full-time, elected and salaried National Treasurer.
2. The creation of a full-time, elected and salaried at-large officer for the Toronto office.
3. A National Executive reporting structure for Travel Cuts information that will include methods of reporting for the membership representatives and a way to inform the members.
4. The creation of a structure, ie. shareholders meeting, for information on Travel Cuts at each general meeting.
5. Continue the Canada - Cuba "Student to Student" Exchange, budget money for it.

