

## LETTERS

## N.M.U.N.

Dear Editor:

Since early last fall, a small, dedicated group of students has been working on plans to represent UPEI in the National Model United Nations simulation to take place in New York City between April 6 and April 11 of this year. In the last two weeks their hard work has begun to show results.

Their success is due, in great measure, to the assistance of the student body outside the participating group, and, especially, to the generosity of the Student Union Council. As adviser to the Model U.N. delegation, I would like to thank and congratulate the Council for supporting such an important student activity, and to report to the general student body about what the Model U.N. means to UPEI and how it can be further assisted.

The Model U.N. is a full-fledged simulation of the United Nations General Assembly, most of its committees, and some U.N.-affiliated bodies. One hundred and thirty-five country delegations are being simulated by students from more than one hundred and twenty universities and colleges in the United States, Canada, and Puerto Rico. Only four Canadian schools are represented - Dalhousie, Concordia, John Abbott C.E.C.E.P. and - UPEI!

Student participants from UPEI were recruited by advertising in the Sun and, when more expertise was needed, by approaching students who seemed to have relevant backgrounds - especially in Economics. When it appeared, at registration deadline on November 10, that as many as fifteen students might participate, UPEI's delegation asked to represent two countries. Having decided in a series of meetings that Africa was our area of interest, we got assigned our first-choice country, Zimbabwe, and Ethiopia, which was farther down on our list. For three months, then, UPEI has been committed to participate; \$150 was sent to New York; our roles were announced in N.M.U.N. literature distributed across the continent. The pressure to follow through successfully was on!

After this point, we went

through some harrowing moments, as qualms about the work load and, especially, worries about the possible financial burden involved depleted our original group. Vigorous recruiting got our numbers back up to seventeen and gave each country delegation a delegation head, charged with overall policy supervision and research co-ordination, leading six "Zimbabwean" delegates and nine "Ethiopian" delegates, each with a particular U.N. committee responsibility.

The delegates face formidable tasks. Each has to master a theme such as world trade, disarmament, human rights, environment, refugees, freedom of information, reform of the international monetary system, food, or women's rights. Each has to be an expert on the politics, economics and culture of Zimbabwe or Ethiopia. Everyone has to be alert to the likely policy positions - friendly, hostile, or uncommitted - of neighbouring countries, big powers, and policy "blocs". For four of the five days of sessions, each delegate has to work primarily alone in his/her large "committee", such as UNCTAD or UNESCO. Delegates must use U.N. language and observe diplomatic decorum, try to achieve influence, and fend off attacks by unfriendly delegations. Resolutions will be prepared and delegates will need to cite numerous prior resolutions and debates by date, and by session and resolution number. Above all, country policy must be consistent from committee to committee, and everyone will expect the "Zimbabweans" and the "Ethiopians" to act like their real U.N. counterparts, not like Canadians from the Maritime provinces or from Ontario.

Many other schools participating have up to fifteen years' experience at N.M.U.N. Regional Model U.N.'s and high school U.N.'s have given some delegates numerous chances to acquire prior expertise. Large, diversified departments of political science or schools of international affairs send their top, most mature students to compete. Schools ten or twenty times our size are involved. Some are definitely elite schools with large numbers of very well-to-do students and huge endowments.

This is UPEI's first year of involvement in N.M.U.N. We are participating because

a few students from various disciplines decided to take a chance that we could pull this project together, and worked with the Political Science Department and the Political Science Students' Association (recipients of the original flyer) to realize it. Senior or junior History, Economics, Political Science and Religious Studies majors anchor our delegations, but the majority of participants are sophomores and freshmen. Enthusiasm and diligence, along with native intelligence, are the delegation's main assets. Both N.M.U.N. guidebook information and advice from Dalhousie's political science chairman suggest that we can do quite well starting from this base.

From the beginning, finances have posed an awesome challenge. Airfares quoted in October have doubled by February, because of price hikes and seat shortages. Van rentals are costly, as is gas. The hotel where all delegates will stay will cost about \$2,000. Registration fees come to U.S. \$40 each. Total costs without meals will approach \$5,500.

If fund-raising should fall short, I have stressed that those who had personal funds to contribute would pay into a general fund to sponsor the entire delegation - all would go, or none would! Most delegates, like a lot of their fellow students, are living on the financial knife-edge. Several delegates have expressed doubt even about being able to pay for meals in New York.

Today, however, prospects for the delegation's financial success seem promising. External Affairs has offered up to \$1,000 toward transportation. Raffles at student pubs have been yielding modest dividends - about \$75 a week. But the big, thrilling boost came from the Student Union last Sunday with a significant contribution. It looks like the delegation is approaching halfway mark financially. There are still raffles to go, an approach to President Meincke, off-campus fund-raising, and possible work weekends. Individual students can help in this process by buying raffle tickets and suggesting fund-raising ideas to the chairman of the Political Science Department. But

the Student Union has, I think quite rightly, recognized that when UPEI is putting its collective best foot forward in an international forum, (with over 1% of the whole student body participating!), a collective financial contribution is well warranted. We may hope that the Administration, despite financial crisis, can match their stake in this delegation's efforts!

So, I tip my hat to the Student Union. Faith that an early commitment of money, time and persons to this project's success would be justified is paying off. Seventeen UPEI'ers will go to match wits with students from some of the most prestigious and largest and also from some of the smaller but very dedicated schools on the continent. Most people there will probably wonder "Where in h... is Prince Edward Island? We intend to be sure they know, after April 11. I am confident that we will perform with the best of them.

So let's get behind these seventeen students! They're taking seven gruelling days out just before exams - for travel and five days of twelve-hour formal activity. They may still wind up shelling out lots of personal cash they can't afford. As many as eleven of them are pledged to give up part of their reading week to research key information at the nearest U.N. depository library in Halifax (more expenses involved). Most costs must be pre-paid by early March. Policy statements are being submitted to New York, in a flurry of activity, by this Saturday.

If this year's project lives up to expectations, I believe we can hope to institutionalize UPEI's involvement in N.M.U.N. and open this experience up to dozens of students over the years. Even if we don't do that, the Student Union has made a major contribution to getting our name known out in the wide world this year. Thanks in advance to anyone else who can help.

Sincerely yours,

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Delegation.