

# Panther Prints

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Waiting for Santa Claus to Come Since 1969

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## Student Union Executive Favours Casa

By Kent Driscoll

According to the UPEI Student Union Executive, the needs of UPEI students would be better served in CASA, as opposed to CFS. CFS (the Canadian Federation of Students) is our current lobbying voice on a national level, while CASA (Canadian Alliance of Student Associations) is a national lobbying group who was formed from student unions who were displeased with the performance of CFS.

The major concern that the executive of the Student Union have with CFS is their tendency to put a high priority on large social issues, and their belief that all issues are student issues. This is readily evidenced by the recent national meeting of CFS. A number of issues that CFS believes to be related to students include the death penalty, the war in Sierra Leone, abortion, Quebec's and the

First Nations' right to self-determination, and the "fear mongering hate tactics" of the Reform Party.

According to Student Union Vice-President External Chris Grey, the executive member who is responsible for dealing with CFS, a large number of issues that CFS spend time and money discussing are, "not related to students", and our needs would be better served by joining a group like CASA, who only consider education issues to be student issues.

Former Student Union President, and current CFS National Executive Representative, Amber Allin, believes CFS to be a superior organization to CASA, for a number of reasons. She believes CASA to have "undercurrents of elitism", and believes that UPEI will have a stronger voice on a national level if they remain in CFS. As well, when questioned on

whether education is a right, as opposed to a privilege, CASA has refused to come out with a clear stance. They will not say education is a right (which is one of the rallying calls of CFS), but they will not say it is a privilege either. They fall between, with the ambiguous statement that education is "a necessity". This offends many CFS loyalists who strongly believe that a post-secondary education is the right of all.

A further concern that CFS National Executive Rep. Amber Allin has is with a motion that was nearly passed by CASA, making voting power in their national meetings determined by the amount of students that attend each university. If this "representation by population" motion had passed, a university like Dalhousie would have a much larger say than a university with a smaller population, such as UPEI. In CFS, each mem-

ber campus receives one vote, regardless of size.

As well, Allin is concerned with the tactics of CASA. She alleges that members of CASA have been lobbying PEI MLA's and MP's, while UPEI is not a member of CASA. She believes the organization to be "overstepping its bounds" in this manner. She is worried that CASA is speaking for the students of UPEI, while UPEI is not a member of CASA, and therefore, doesn't vote in the body.

Another major concern that has been expressed about CASA is the criminal allegations against its former acting president, who was accused of embezzlement. While CFS N.E. Rep. Amber Allin believes this to be a matter of concern, Student Union President Chris Burns believes this matter to be closed. "They dealt with it properly, and the matter was taken care of. Since they got a scare very early on,

they are now very concerned about being honest. [CASA] has opened all their financial records to all universities, members and non-members alike. This is more than CFS has done for us, and we aren't even a member of CASA. You couldn't steal a rubber band from CASA now."

UPEI discussed this issue last year, with a referendum on membership in CFS, asking students their opinion on membership. According to CFS bylaws, the only way for a campus to leave is through a referendum. While the students voted to leave CFS, the results were not accepted due to voting irregularities. The Student Union plans to open the issue to students again, with a referendum on CFS membership, which is to be held at the same time as the general election. With the two occurring at the same, this is sure to be a hot campaign issue in the spring election.

Happy Holidays from the staff and volunteers of the Panther Prints. We will resume publishing January 14, 1997.

See you then!



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