

# student

OTTAWA (CUP) -- Delegates from about 40 Canadian universities and community colleges today (Nov. 5) established a new national student union, but not before representatives from Quebec and the Atlantic Provinces had walked out.

Creation of the National Union of Students/ Association Nationale des Etudiants (NUS/ANES) followed three days of protracted, and sometimes tedious debate on a constitution proposed by a four-member steering committee, set up at a previous conference at Windsor last May.

But the fledgling organization's future is uncertain because potential members must conduct referendums on their campuses before being allowed to join. Although a few student councils had already authorized their delegates to join the new union, only Simon Fraser University has conducted the necessary referendum.

Delegates authorized the "central committee" or executive of the NUS to solicit grants from potential members to finance its formative stages. The only commitment made at the conference was a grant of \$1000. from the University of British Columbia Student Council.

The conference was perhaps the largest gathering of Canadian student council representatives since the dissolution of the old Canadian Union of Students (CUS) in 1969.

The Quebec-Atlantic provinces walkout occurred after delegates reached a bitter impasse over methods of membership in the new union.

Quebec representatives, who came from the English-speaking universities and some English and French CEGEPS, demanded representation based on region. Loyola, which introduced the proposal wanted all NUS delegates to be appointed by regional student unions, with all five regions of Canada having equal voting power. They were especially adamant that their representation come from the growing Front des Etudiants du Quebec (FEQ), rather than from individual institutions.

The Loyola proposal drew on the example of FEQ where Quebec is divided into six regional government bodies. The regions elect a maximum of 100 delegates to a general assembly but representation is not

based on population. Montreal has about 60 per cent of the students but on only 30 assembly delegates and other regions have at least eleven.

The Quebec delegates contended that the method prevents one power bloc from controlling the organization. Each region must meet before an assembly meeting to develop positions scheduled for discussion at the assembly.

The proposed constitution called for representation from individual institutions based on two votes per school. The plan was favoured by most delegates from the west and Ontario, but it was amended to a modified representation by population formula after the walkout.

The Atlantic provinces wanted representation from provincial organizations, with each province having equal voting power.

The eastern provinces feared the organization could become controlled by Ontario and Quebec under representation by population. They feared insufficient attention would be paid to Atlantic region problems. They also claimed representation by institution would result in too unwieldy a body.

After being voted down overwhelmingly (16-73-8) Friday night, Nov. 3, the Atlantic delegates supported the Quebec proposal, but it was defeated Saturday morning (Nov. 4) by a vote of 27-54-11.

A compromise then began to emerge as Ontario and British Columbia delegates appeared willing to allow each province the right to appoint its delegates to NUS as it chose. A measure to allow schools to give their regional or provincial associations their proxy votes gained wide support and was eventually passed.

Although the delegates came close to agreement on methods of delegate selection, the conference floundered over the allocation of delegates to various regions and provinces.

Just after the Quebec proposal for regional representation was defeated, the University of Guelph introduced a motion declaring that both institutional and regional appointment were valid methods of delegate selection. Most delegates west of the Ottawa River hoped that this, along with the proxy voting

proposal, would sufficiently appease Quebec and the Maritimes.

The two dissenting regions immediately caucused. Delegates were sharply divided on whether the new proposal was acceptable. Then, Carleton University student council president Bruce Cameron, who served on the national steering committee, entered the caucus room with a compromise proposal. The proposal, which originated with some B.C. delegates, could have united the delegates because the Quebec-Maritimes caucus gladly accepted it, but its failure among angry recriminations wrecked NUS as an initially Canada-wide organization.

The Cameron plan would have allowed each province to determine its mode of representation but would have divided the size of representation as follows: 6 percent to each of the four Atlantic provinces, 20 percent to Quebec, 20 percent to Ontario, 7 percent to each of the three prairie provinces and 15 percent to B.C.

Immediately after the Saturday lunch break, delegates overwhelmingly approved the Guelph declaration. Cameron then introduced his plan, but it was immediately attacked for giving over-representation to the Atlantic provinces.

"If the Maritime provinces are going to get 24 percent of the votes then I wonder if they are willing to pay 24 percent of the fees," Susan Geason-administrative assistant of the University of Toronto part-time student council said.

The University of Alberta threatened to withdraw if the proposal passed. The prairie delegates, who had strongly

rejected the regionalism concept, caucused and produced a plan for modified rep by pop -- one vote for every 5000 students in an institution or fraction thereof.

The Atlantic delegates angrily rejected this plan and McGill and Bishop's universities made a counter-proposal which the prairies and many in Ontario and B.C. found equally unacceptable. The plan called for a 100-member organizational assembly of which 30 delegates would be chosen on the basis of three per province, and 70 would be allocated by provincial student population. Cameron accepted it.

But the proposal contained a contentious preamble which said--"recognizing that representation by institution is an artificial and unjust standard and that representation by strict population is equally prejudicial."

The preamble antagonized delegates who wanted strict institutional representation and appeared to polarize them against any regional percentage proposal.

Chairman Dan Boisvert from Loyola University ruled the McGill proposal out of order. Cameron challenged the chair but the ruling was upheld 49 to 19 with 20 delegate votes, mostly from the Maritimes, abstaining.

At this point, Dawson CEGEP from Montreal walked out saying, "this conference has proven to us that the federal concept of representation within the present boundaries of Canada cannot permit democratic process."

Amid considerable uproar and confusion, Cameron's original percentage proposal was rejected and the prairies rep by pop plan was accepted.

Tom LeRoy from St. Thomas University in Fredericton N.B. then walked to the microphone and read a biblical quotation from Isaiah, referring to the decay of civilization.

