

CFS: What's in it for you?

By AMBER ALLIN, CFS National Executive Rep.

Prior to having you read what I believe to be the major issues at stake in the upcoming CFS referendum, I want to spell out my personal bias. I have been involved in student politics at UPEI for the past three years. I have attended several of the founding meetings for the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA) and presently represent PEI on the National Executive of the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS). I am strongly in support of maintained membership in the CFS - voting YES!

Some Student Union members would have UPEI students vote to pull out of the CFS without a thorough discussion of alternatives, this equates to action without foresight. During the referendum it would be wise to ask Student Union councilors, what are the alternatives? What is the mandate of CASA, if they consider this to be an alternative. Where is UPEI going to get the funding to do research and lobbying on national issues, to meet with other university students across Canada and run major campaigns? Is there another national student organization which offers a Student Work Abroad Program, Travel company, International Student I.D., and a Student Saver Card? Where will the UPEI SU access and resource campaign materials on such diverse issues as the chilly climate, date rape, student loans, intellectual property rights, and the federal budget?

The Canadian Federation of Students represents 375 000 members in over 60 colleges and universities across Canada. One of the crucial questions that will be addressed in this referendum is: Do university students need a national organization? I would answer this question, yes. Like never before, students are witnessing an onslaught of federal cutbacks that have resulted in increased tuition and user fees. Tuition fee levels, financial aid programs and research funding are set directly or indirectly by both levels of government. It is vital that students' interests and concerns are represented to these governments. If students vote to pull out of CFS the students will have no national representation. No campus has the resources or political clout to effectively influence the federal and provincial governments itself. For UPEI to try and maintain an office in Ottawa with these resources it would cost hundreds of thousands of dollars.

For those who are of the opinion that perhaps a national organization is not needed to protect UPEI students' interests, a quick overview of the lobbying provided by the CFS will put this into perspective. The CFS has been successful in influencing government by using three approaches. It produces quality research, develops relationships with government, and demonstrates that there is public support for its issues. CFS employs five full-time researchers across Canada. CFS has two registered lobbyists that arrange meetings with Members of Parliament and senior civil servants. These lobbyists are also resources for UPEI members who meet with MPs and MLAs locally. Success stories of the Canadian Federation of Students include a 1989 campaign against applying the GST to tuition and campus residence fees, which forced the federal government to drop the idea. In 1991 the federal government made it harder to manage a student loan by slapping a 3% administrative tax on Student Loans. A national campaign by CFS against this tax led to the removal of the tax in 1992.

The advantages of being a member of Canada's national student organization far exceed the membership fee of 75 cents/month. For more information, please feel free to contact me via e-mail: aallin@upej.ca

Europe: Tips & Tales

By ANDREA BIRD

It was a cold, miserable day in Switzerland. We were biking towards San Bernadino Pass, the highest point we would see in Europe. It was a tough ride, we biked 35 kilometres completely uphill. By 4:00 we were exhausted, freezing and hungry.

Once you hit the higher altitudes it gets more difficult to find a flat place to pitch a tent. Normally, we stopped on farms and slept in their fields. Unfortunately, this little area did not seem to have any farms. We knocked on the doors of houses hoping we would find a garage to sleep in. After trying 6-7 places we finally got a positive response. By this point we were really frustrated and cold.

We were saved! Rich-

ard and Dorris invited us into their little two room apartment. We had hot showers, dried our clothes and ate an incredible dinner. In our honour, these Swiss strangers prepared us Swiss fondue and opened a bottle of wine.

We fell asleep immediately after dinner. At 7:30am the next day, we got up to see an assortment of cheeses, breads and jellies on the table. After breakfast Richard and Dorris packed our bikes into their car and drove us across the pass. We stopped at the top to admire the scenery, take pictures and bid them farewell.

And so, another day of biking began. Strangers had become friends and our spirits had been lifted once again. The rain had stopped; we were now smiling and on our way.

Tips:

-If you are planning a trip consider Eurobus instead of Eurorail. It is a lot cheaper. You get unlimited travel on a bus that stops at most major cities in Europe. The only catch is you have to go in one direction. If you are not planning to backtrack this may be a good alternative to Eurorail.

-If you are travelling with a partner, consider staying in a one star hotel. Often the prices for a double room is comparable to the cost of two hostel beds. Even if it is a few dollars more it might be worthwhile because not all hostels have safe lockers to store your stuff.

-It is always a good idea to carry some Canada pins and a map. Every time we met people who really went out of their way for us we gave them a pin. To us it was not much but to the people who received them it was a real treasure. Call your MP to find out how to get some.



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