

No One Student, No One Student Council Can Go It ALONE A LOOK AT A.F.S.

WHAT IS AFS?

The Atlantic Federation of Students (AFS) is the regional organization of post-secondary students in the four Atlantic Provinces. Through AFS, students are able to voice their concerns to government, research areas of concern, and gather and exchange needed information.

WHY A REGIONAL STUDENT ORGANIZATION?

Student organizations re-emerged in Canada during the early 1970's. The NUS was developed by concerned student unions across the country in order to represent the interests of students at the national level. At the same time a number of provincial and regional student organizations were formed in order to deal with matters of provincial concern and to localize the work of the NUS. The kind of student organization developed in the Atlantic is unique in the country because it is the only regional association.

As a region the Atlantic suffers the common effects of economic underdevelopment. This happens because re-

sources are constantly being drained away from the Atlantic to other parts of the country and the world. As a result the Atlantic is the poorest region in Canada. Governments and businessmen alike have recognized this and have banded together to form the Council of Maritime Premiers and the Atlantic Provinces Economic Council. The governments make collective policies, often on the advice of the APEC, which effect every citizen in the Atlantic. A major area of this collective decision making is that of higher education. The formation of the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission in the mid-70's was a major event in the regionalizing of education policy.

It is this political and economic reality of the Atlantic which demands that students organize on a regional basis. Students can achieve more in the Atlantic if they come together to form a strong regional organization than if they were to organize solely within their own provinces.

WHAT IS THE STRUCTURE OF AFS?

Membership in the organization is based on campus referenda. If students decide to join, \$1.00 is added to their student union fee and is collected for AFS. AFS presently has 15 members and represents over 20,000 students.

The members provide direction to the executive, determine policy, and have the primary responsibility for maintaining AFS activity on their campuses. Twice yearly conferences develop the priorities and policies of the organization.

The most important link in the structure of the organization is the campus coordinator who is appointed by the student council. Within each province there are Caucus Chairs who are responsible for the work at the provincial levels. Two people oversee the work of the entire region: the treasurer and the secretary coordinator. One NUS Central Committee person also sits on the AFS executive.

WHAT DOES AFS DO?

The Federation works on such issues as student aid, cutbacks to education, unemployment, and tuition increases.

The AFS has lobbied the provincial governments to increase student representation on government committees. In Nova Scotia, for instance, three students are nominated yearly to sit on student aid committees. These students guarantee their fellow students a sympathetic ear when it comes to hearing student aid appeals and to advising the government on student aid changes. The student reps. seek regular input from students at the AFS caucus meetings and conferences.

Unemployment was the priority for work during 1977/78. While it was difficult to actually engage students in this work at the campus level, AFS in cooperation with NUS, branched out into the community and was actively involved in building unemployment coalitions. A side effect of this was a low AFS presence on many of the campuses during the past

year. By the spring of '78 the organization reordered its priorities and commenced solid work on educational cutbacks and tuition increases.

Together with the NUS, AFS carried out a successful lobby protesting the federal government's proposed loan ceiling increase. During the spring of '78 AFS organized a regionwide petition campaign protesting the ever decreasing funding levels to the universities. At the same time the organization lobbied the provincial governments for student representation on the MPHEC. This was a success and now Terry Morrison, a past Acadia student, sits on that body.

Sometimes students run ahead of their leadership. This happened in Newfoundland this year when 3500 students demonstrated against the government's decision to impose severe cutbacks on Memorial. AFS supported the students through organizational, financial and moral assistance.

Last year the AFS organized support for a student on the Acadia campus who was involved in a precedent-setting court case with the administration. Over \$1000.00 was raised to help cover legal fees for the student.

AFS also tries to maintain a high level of communications between student councils in the region. To this end the AFS has recently introduced a bi-weekly newsletter to keep students informed of happenings in the region.

WHAT DOES AFS HOPE TO DO IN THE FUTURE?

Compared to other student organizations across the country AFS is a low budget organization. Nonetheless, it is an ambitious organization that wants to serve Atlantic students. In addition to continuing the newsletter, AFS hope to enter a cooperative arrangement with a campus newspaper in order to produce a bi-monthly regional student newspaper along the lines of the NUS **ADVOCATE**. The paper would serve to articulate the needs and concerns of Atlantic students.

Immediate plans include the continued development of the National anti-cutbacks campaign, a reopening of communications with regional groups such as the Association of Atlantic Universities, and a close monitoring of the MPHEC and the economic policies of the Atlantic Provinces Economic Council. The AFS is going to attempt to send an observer to the October conference of APEC in Charlottetown.

ALL STUDENTS CAN PARTICIPATE

We can only build a strong regional organization with the active participation of the students on the campuses. Should you wish to participate, comment or make suggestions on AFS activity, please contact your student union and / or phone or write:

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