



# Kampus Koncern

by Joel Hansen

## A WORD OF WARNING

You are witnessing the democratic ideology manifesting itself; student union elections (sic). The time of year, I am told, when that great mysterious non-entity i.e. the student body, expresses itself!

To begin, a statistical note. In the last three years not more than 30% of those eligible to vote in this annual election actually voted. Translated into concrete meaning, this statistic becomes a symbol of a symptom; a symptom of lack of faith in present structures of student unionism on this campus.

Traditionally, student unions have been a powerless lot. They simply have tried to be a surrogate of the so called democratic institutions which direct the larger political sphere. They have left questions of philosophical and political direction in limbo, as do our larger political institutions. As a result, neither advance the majority of the people they represent.

What our student union has consistently overlooked is the concrete situation of the position of students in their relation to that public institution, UPEI incorporated. The Student Union at UPEI simply refuses to exert itself as an instrument for real student involvement. And I do not mean the kind of involvement that puts a "benevolent" representative on a Faculty-Student committee. I am talking about a more dynamic involvement which seeks the student.

But this "dynamic involvement" can be realized only through "dynamic" means. One obvious approach is the articulation of the student interest. I have yet to see any attempt to publish, for public notification, the aims and ideas of student unionism at UPEI.

Some people say that Student Unions are necessary to organize "efficient" drunken madshows such as "The Week Nobody Can Remember", and little more. Others, myself included, see a much broader role for student unions. Student unions must be di-



verse in their interests. Cultural events cannot be confined to Pig 'N' Whistles etc.; there must be an acceptance by the union to organize the students into cooperatives on all levels of academic and athletic practice. Drama clubs, community projects, debating societies, etc., are a bare minimum if a student union is to have any relevancy.

Assuming that a union of students should never be apolitical, the leaders of student unions should be the principle voices of student thought and feeling on the various issues of the day. This means that student leaders should be, in essence, "activists". They should lead the way in taking the student interest and concern into the community, the so called "real" world.

However, our student union has, in its short history, failed to lead the students into this "real" world. They have become instead a bureaucracy for fostering the escapist tendencies in the human being -- arranging weekly drunks for example. The student awareness of the role of our student union

does not extend beyond the bureaucratic because of the aforesaid. Thus the reason for the general apathy expressed at election time each year. Nobody gives a sweet Goddamn!!!

The newly elected executive, whoever they may be, must strive to counteract this apathetic trend. They must continuously confront the student union members (i.e. all students) with issues based on "real student interest". The "real student interest" can be known only after encountering students on their own level -- this means that the new executive must listen with their ears to the ground. They must try to avoid that sickness which pervades all bureaucracies, namely elitism.

All too often our student union leaders have become a "phony" elite playing a social game rather than striving for political struggle.

Eventually the students at UPEI will give up on the idea of a student union if its role remains as uninteresting as it is at present. A word of warning to the new executive -- own up time is nigh!!