

What should AFS be doing?

Many Atlantic student councils have had it with the Atlantic Federation of Students (A.F.S.) The growing dissent, begun last year by a few student unions, is now more widespread and major institutions have vowed to end their association with the organization.

At an August meeting of representatives of 10 Atlantic institutions, 6 of the 7 AFS members present voiced extreme dissatisfaction with the organization.

They weren't very specific about the problems with AFS, but there is one thing they do agree on - the organization is just not working. There was talk of simultaneous

campus-wide referenda in hopes that students will cease their support of the organization.

AFS presently consists of 15 member institutions whose students, after approving membership in a democratic election, each pay a \$1 levy to the federation.

Dalhousie Student Union President Mike Power says there is a credibility gap in AFS. He feels the organization is not representative of the students. "It's just not delivering," says Power.

"There are two distinct parts to AFS - the federation and the membership. I tend to think the reps on councils are of the same ilk as those they

represent. The AFS executive is ideologically different."

B.J. Arsenault, Acadia Student Union President, is also fed up with the organization. "Student unions have tried to work with AFS. Acadia has always tried to be a leader. 'Let's give it one more chance' was the attitude in the past. Now it's time to do something else."

Diane Wright, President of the Mount Saint Vincent Student Union, says the basic problem with AFS is the membership. "Many people are not trying to utilize the structure. The structure is set up to function if people participate. Those

complaining don't want to do any work."

Denise Roberge, Nova Scotia member on the AFS executive, concurs that the structure is sound. She believes the problem is in the way people view their roles. "They see themselves as something apart from the federation. The student unions and the executive should analyze their roles."

AFS consists of four provincial caucuses with a representative from each on the executive. "The only problem that might lie there," says Roberge, is that Newfoundland only has two member institutions and P.E.I. has only one, so there are difficulties in forming strong provincial caucuses. However, it would be a bigger problem is the provinces decided to work alone."

Both Power and Arsenault believe there is a need for some type of organization other than AFS. Arsenault sees the emergence of four provincial organizations. "The way things are organized now, Halifax tells people what to do. If there were 4 organizations, each would know their own province."

Power thinks a new organization would be more service-minded. He believes individual student unions have enough power to deal with governments on their own without the need for an organization to represent them.

Wright says it is necessary to have a regional organization due to the political structure in this area. "Anyone who thinks individual councils can deal with government more adequately than a unified body does not understand the situation."

There have been troubles before.....

In November 1976 student representatives decided AFS was ineffective. They understood the need for a strong regional organization and felt it could not be achieved without a sound financial base, a full-time staff person and a regional office. At the

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