

The Northern News is a free and editorially independent student newspaper. Editorials express the unanimous opinion of the editorial board of the Northern News unless otherwise indicated. Final responsibility for all news and editorial content rests with the editor-in-chief.

Editorial Comment:

Student Senate Not Representative

If the new Student Government constitution has not already made a mockery out of participatory government, a decision made at the Tuesday meeting of the SGA certainly does. The decision: to award \$90 to Senators Diane Bostic and Melvin Payne so that they can go to Washington on a campaign to save the NMU Job Corps.

If, as Senator Martin Holmes stated, the purpose in awarding the grant was to send two senators (the emphasis is Holmes') to Washington to speak for the student body, we would not object so strongly. But such is not the case.

After the spectacular defeat of this week's Job Corps referendum, it appears that two persons who represent special interest groups dedicated to the preservation of the Corps can hardly be considered as representatives of student body opinion on the subject.

The above point was brought out by Senator Jim Winters—and it drew a sharp response from Senator Adelaide Simms. Senator Simms reasoning? According to her, the results of the referendum should be discounted because the "majority of the students haven't visited the Job Corps and don't know anything about it."

Which is a polite way of saying that the students on this campus are too stupid to engage in participatory democracy. If that's the case, Senator Simms, why do you sit and support the SGA-elected and supposedly serving the interests of that incompetent student body?

There was very little talk of "the incompetent masses" when that loaded referendum supposedly showed faculty support for the Job Corps. There would have been even less talk if the results of Tuesday's referendum had been affirmative.

But this has been the problem of our campus "liberals" all along: a simple, basic refusal to recognize any facts or opinions which do not support their pre-conceived notion of what the situation should be. When the local newspaper supported the Corps, it was quoted as though it were the Bible. But when the same newspaper yelled "foul" when the results of the loaded survey were foisted on the public as gospel, suddenly that newspaper became "biased in its treatment of the Job Corps."

It's an interesting double standard.

We support participatory democracy. We may not always agree with the masses, but, when it comes to spending their tax dollar, the decision belongs to those masses alone—not to any self-righteous "savior."

The Student Senate has acted without considering at all the desires of its constituency. When it does this, the Senate no longer is a parliamentary body—it is an oligarchy, a dictatorship.

Corps Political Victim

Anyone who has ever either participated in or a student of the political arena is very aware of extremely high mortality rates that its activities incur. This refers to individuals both inside and outside the organization.

People within the political organization realize the risk they are taking on by participating, but the individuals outside that become pawns of the political machine do not realize this risk even though they can be the biggest losers. The women of the Job Corps center at Northern and many other centers like it have become the political victims in any case, but especially in light of the federal government's decision to phase out the Marquette center immediately and not allow it to run up to or slightly beyond the contract termination date.

What makes the situation so unfortunate is that this political maneuvering is a gross exploitation of human beings who have practically no control over their futures.

Unreceptive To Criticism

Constitution: Student Sellout

One legal opinion has said that the students of Northern Michigan University have approved a new constitution. After months of deceit and an outstanding snow job for a finale, the Student Government Evaluation Committee and particularly Assistant Dean of Students Norman Hefke have succeeded in imposing a third-rate student body constitution upon NMU.

The University's extremely competent attorneys have made an informal ruling that the 672 students that cast an abstention vote did not vote at all. Consequently, with nearly one-third of the voters ignored, the students of Northern Michigan University have adopted their third constitution in five years with the approval of the Board of Control.

There is no doubt that more than one legal opinion on the issue exists, but to argue any issue on a technicality is much less effective than presenting the actual issues. The fact of the matter in this case is that the students of NMU have been literally sold out by a committee that never faced up to the task that it was formed to take on, and more important by an Assistant Dean of Students that saw fit to manipulate the committee, close his ears to all divergent points of view, and completely write off all criticism of the proposed document as ignorant babbling.

The constitution may be declared adopted. However, there is no legal interpretation that can ever change the fact that this approval was gained through devious means that are hardly a credit to any university. We may have a new constitution, but it is because Hefke decided that he would have the constitution he wanted at any cost.

Before the original committee was formed, at a retreat at Camp Cusino, the very issue of integration of the governing functions was discussed as a predominant reason for forming a special committee to draft a new document. Yet seven months later, when the rough draft was published, it completely failed (and still fails) to do anything about integrating the governing functions.

In the month that has passed since that time, the committee and Hefke have been completely unreceptive to even a consideration of the criticisms and recommendations made.

The most disgusting deceit has come in the manner in which the election was carried out. If an abstention vote is no vote at all, then why was it included as a third alternative on the ballot?—a ballot for which, by the way, there were no election instructions.

According to one of three student members of the Evaluation Committee, this was done because the committee was afraid that the constitution would be beaten by "no" votes. Offering the third choice of abstention was, according to this member, designed as a way to head off the "no" votes.

Students were given a choice which appeared to have a definite meaning only to have it discounted. The fact can never be changed that 59 per cent of the individuals who went to the effort to mark a ballot did not vote for adoption.

Even the last minute inclusion of the Job Corps question on the same ballot is quite inappropriate. The only purpose it served, since the SGA has never had any intention of representing the opinion of the student body on this question, was to confuse the predominant issue.

The question is: how many more students would have voted "no"; how many more students would have voted "yes"; how many more students would have not voted at all if it were not for the misleading, underhanded tactics used by the Evaluation Com-

mittee, the Elections Committee of the SGA, and Hefke?

Hefke's position throughout has amounted to a sob story which accuses the NEWS of jeopardizing all these months of work, splitting the student body, and, because of the time factor, placing the Board of Control in a difficult position as far as approving or disapproving is concerned.

Our position is that Hefke is personally responsible for these problems. Through his iron-willed domination of the Evaluation Committee, he has seen to it that all criticism has been completely ignored.

Through some timing of his own, he has put the Board of Control in a position of either having to accept this constitution or leaving the student body with the present document until next year. In light of the serious problems student government has now, the Board has no alternative than to accept this document which is the product of one man's thinking (drawing upon a completely non-analogous situation at Michigan State University) of how student government should be at NMU.

Apparently, however, this is the domineering role which the present student leaders have agreed upon for Hefke. The secretary of the SGA can verify that the chairman and vice-chairman have no qualms about allowing him to censure the minutes of the meetings. It also doesn't appear to bother too many of these "student leaders" that Hefke sees fit to send NEWS reporters away from other meetings so he can "talk without being quoted."

At this point in time, all that the students of NMU can hope for is that the conditions become such in the next year so that the constitution can be altered and other governing units fully incorporated into the legislative function of NMU student government. Once again we find ourselves with a "hope and a prayer."

Legislatively, this constitution has succeeded in removing the governed from the governing ten times over. An efficient all-University government has been set up without developing its counterpart to local government. A twelve-man oligarchy has been established and next fall, if you're a freshman, sophomore, junior or senior living in the dormitory, just see how inaccessible to student problems this group will be. They may be able to legislate efficiently, but it will be from their own ivory tower. The necessary channels of student involvement have not been created and the Executive Committee of ASNMU stands the very real threat of becoming an isolated, unresponsive entity from the student body.

No one has ever said that true representative democracy is efficient.

Jeffry R. Jurmu
 The Editors

