



New Zealand University Students' Association (Inc)

Te Ropu Akonga o nga Whare Wananga o Aotearoa

ANNUAL REPORT

For the financial year of
1ST January 1998 to 31st December 1998

1998 NZUSA NATIONAL OFFICE STAFF

Patrick Rooney – President

Sarah Helm – Vice President

Christina Rizsos – National Women’s Coordinator

Rowena Tun – Office administrator (replacing Vanessa Moe)

David Choat – Research Officer

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1998 Federation Executive

- Renee Garner Otago University Students Association
- Chris Hayes Lincoln University Students Association
- Darel Hall Canterbury University Students Association
- Alistair Shaw Victoria University Students Association
- Peter Hobson Massey University Students Association
- Margot Symes Massey Albany University Students Association
- Mark O'Brian Auckland University Students Association
- Sandra Murray Extramural University Students Association

President's Report

Patrick Rooney



1.0 Introduction

1998 represented one of the most challenging and significant years faced by the New Zealand student movement. The year was characterized by harsh Government reforms, and attacks centered at the very heart of student organizations.

This report aims to cover some of these significant issues and events in 1998, as well as the gains made in strengthening the national student organisation, NZUSA. Specifically, it will cover the Voluntary Student Membership issue, the Tertiary Review White Paper and 1998 Government Budget, and internal issues within NZUSA. Other items will also be touched on.

2.0 Voluntary Student Membership

One of the most serious issues faced by NZUSA and its constituent members in 1998 was Government legislation aiming to make membership of Students' Associations voluntary. This legislation threatened the very heart of student organisations. That is their capacity to represent students in all their diversity, as well as threatening their primary source of income, the compulsory fee paid at enrollment.

A concerted campaign to defeat the legislation, begun in 1997, proved successful. Intensive lobbying of MP's, and regular use of the media by NZUSA, and members, resulted in a change of position by National's Coalition partner, NZ First. After months of debate on the issue a compromise piece of legislation was passed. The Act aimed to let students at each campus decide the nature of the student levy by way of a referendum to be held by May 1999.

However, it soon became clear to student representatives that the new referendum-based legislation was heavily biased in favour of voluntary

membership. The later decision on behalf of the then minority National Government to exclude the payment of Students' Association fees from the Student Loan confirmed this bias.

Despite the campaign stacked firmly on the side of supporters of voluntary membership, the results of the referendums held in 1999, confirmed the overwhelming support for compulsory membership at most campuses. The only University campus to switch to voluntary membership was the Auckland University Students' Association (AUSA), which lost by the narrowest of proportions. The Waikato Students' Union (WSU) remained voluntary as students had initially decided in 1996. The WSU is not a current member of NZUSA.

3.0 Tertiary Review and 1998 Budget

3.1 Tertiary Review White Paper

The long awaited White Paper, the end product of the Tertiary Review process, was released in late 1998. Many of the major decisions concerning resourcing and other issues were released in earlier released documents, hence taking many of the controversial decisions from the report. Some of the main announcements related to the area of quality and in particular to the area of course approval and evaluation.

Prior to the release of the Government White Paper, NZUSA and APSU released an Alternative White Paper. This document which gained substantial media and public interest, offered one of the most concise and pragmatic editions of NZUSA's vision for tertiary education in New Zealand. It will surely be a useful document for years to come, and particularly for Students' Association representatives in what will be a rigorous election year in 1999.

The release of the White Paper marked a significant point for NZUSA. It represented the strenuous efforts of NZUSA National Officers, the NZUSA Research Officer - David Choat, and campus campaign groups to educate the public and students, and in the long run influence the final outcomes of the review.

The very fact that the White Paper was released over six months after its proposed release date can be attributed to the efforts of students and staff to turn the review into an issue of national importance.

3.2 The 1998 Budget

The 1998 Budget had a severe impact on the lives of students. Three of the most significant reforms were the introduction of the UTTA (Universal Tertiary Tuition Allowance), the introduction of full Government funding of Private Training Establishments (PTE), and the axing of the Emergency Unemployment Benefit for many students.

The introduction of the UTTA represented both the success of lobbying and protest, but also the betrayal of students by the National/NZ First Coalition. Firstly, the UTTA was essentially a voucher system; however, it was a much less harsh version than was suggested in the initial Tertiary Review document. Again this can be attributed to well researched submissions, protest and lobbying on behalf of student and staff organisations. However the labeling of the 'voucher' as an 'allowance' represented the end of student hopes for a Universal Living Allowance set at the level of the Unemployment Benefit as originally promised in the National/NZ First Coalition Agreement, hence betrayal by the Government.

4.0 Income Support changes

4.1 Changes to the Emergency Unemployment Benefit

The decision to exclude all students, except those on a Student Allowance, from guaranteed income over the summer period raised emotion amongst students. Intense lobbying of MP's and Cabinet Ministers by NZUSA and APSU failed to reverse the decision.

Well-organised responses to this announcement, in the form of soup kitchens, occurred on most University Campuses.

4.2 Training Incentive Allowance (TIA)

The NZUSA Women's Coordinator, Christina Rizos, and Research Officer, David Choat, produced a series of quality documents in the TIA and it's importance to beneficiaries, and women in particular. This succeeded in raising consciousness about this issue, amongst students generally, and parliamentarians.

4.3 Transition of Loans and Allowances to Work and Income NZ (WINZ)

NZUSA had major concerns regarding the transition of Loans and Allowances to WINZ. These primarily concerned the way WINZ traditionally treats students, the loss of Students' Association input into the service, and the possible consequences to the nature and

timing of allowances. Large delays in early 1999, and the attitude of many in senior management roles, put our concerns into reality.

5.0 Relationship with Te Mana Akonga

NZUSA's relationship with Te Mana Akonga improved significantly in 1998.

An increasing commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi developed amongst NZUSA, as demonstrated at the three NZUSA Conferences. All of which had components aimed at getting Tauwiwi to understand their responsibilities to Maori.

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between Te Mana Akonga and NZUSA in late 1998. This was amongst the final stages in a process started by NZUSA Vice President, Sarah Helm, early in the year. The Memorandum of Understanding should ensure that our relationship with Te Mana Akonga is lasting and genuine.

6.0 Internal issues and restructuring

1998 was by no means 'smooth-sailing' for Federation Office and its constituents. There were significant differences of opinion between members about the way in which the organisation approached issues, and also how these issues were prioritised. Members were often uncompromising in their views and refused to understand the positions of their fellow members. This placed the Federation Officers in a difficult position in regard to their representative role. By mid-1998 these differences, along with the proposed VSM legislation, were threatening the future viability of the organisation.

In October 1998 a process began to start looked at the purpose of NZUSA and how it could go about representing the breadth of its membership. This would inevitably involve restructuring of the organisation. Two documents, Strengthening Our Voice, and SOV2 were published on this subject. The restructuring process will continue into 1999, hopefully with positive outcomes for students in all their diversity.

7.0 Queer Issues

The second annual Queer Youth and Students (UniQ) Conference was held in Wellington, organised by NZUSA. This followed on from the first conference organised by the MUSA President in 1997. It tackled a wide range of current issues and looked for solid answers to current

problems. The next conference is organised for Christchurch in 1999, followed by Auckland in 2000. Participants recommended that future conferences be streamed so that those interested in politics and those in-group development, can both get time to discuss their issues.

NZUSA Vice President, Sarah Helm, organised Querelle, a Queer short story competition sponsored by The Listener. There were a large amount of entries to the competition.

8.0 Academic Issues

I was the CUAP and AAU Representative in 1998. Many of the issues revolved around the white paper and its impact on quality. The issue of course information was also present throughout the year.

9.0 Students' With Disabilities

A second NZUSA/APSU Students' With Disabilities Conference was held, this time in Palmerston North. The conference came up with many recommendations for NZUSA and the Government. Thanks must be given to Christina Rizos, and Rowena Tun, Administration Officer, for all the effort they put into organising the conference.

10.0 Pacific Island Students

A workshop was held on Pacific Island Students at the final NZUSA Conference in Palmerston North. It was agreed that NZUSA would support an annual Fono for Pacific Island Students. The first one is to be held in Auckland in 1999.

Postgraduate Students

11.0 International Affairs

NZUSA re-stated its commitment to the international student movement after years of neglect.

Two solidarity actions took place in New Zealand, both organised by NZUSA. The first was a Trans-Tasman Day of Action on Rainforests, and the second was a National Week of Action in Solidarity with Indonesian Students. The former followed the death of hundreds of students during students protests aimed at ousting Indonesian dictator, General Suharto.

In addition, various NZUSA Officers attended international conferences. Sarah Helm attended an UNESCO Conference on Higher Education in Paris, France. Christina Rizos attended a women in Universities conference, titled Winds Of Change, in Sydney, Australia. I attended an Asia

Pacific Youth and Students Caucus in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and a NUS Education Conference in Melbourne, Australia.

The only overseas trip paid for by NZUSA was that to Winds of Change.

12.0 National Affairs

NZUSA keep up good relations with Government and sector organisations in 1998. Regular letters, meetings and newsletters kept them up to date with student issues.

In addition, NZUSA Officers extended the range of organisations we were in contact with. This had successful political ramifications for the organisation as a whole.

13.0 Miscellaneous

13.1 Tertiary Women's Focus Group

This bi-cultural organisation replaced the defunct Women's Education Coalition Aotearoa (WECA). It organised a series of campaign throughout the year. In addition, the Women's Coordinator and Federation Officers produced reports on the De Facto Relationships Bill, and the Social Code of Responsibility, both from a student perspective.

13.2 Postgraduate Students' Conference.

This was held in Wellington in November. Proceedings of the conference will be given out in mid-1999.

13.3 Research and reports.

NZUSA produced numerous reports and pieces of research. These offer an interesting overview of the position on students in our society and are essential reading. Amongst the largest undertakings were the Income and Expenditure Survey, the Debt Casebook Survey, and the alternative White Paper.

14.0 Conclusion

This report is not supposed to be an exhaustive list of NZUSA's achievements and activities in 1998. It was merely a brief rundown of some of the more important or topical events. Nor is it supposed to represent a breakdown of time spent on issues by National Officers.

The elected officers and staff received unjustified criticism for the amount of time they spent on non-education issues in 1998, therefore it

is important to make clear that the overwhelming proportion of time was spent on education issues.

However, in my opinion, it is essential that future officers continue to work on a wide range of issues. This is the only way of giving the organisation the political clout and allies it needs to make any impact on the political process. It is also the only way of ensuring we represent our membership in all their entirety. A return to a single issue, lobbying-based organisation risks NZUSA and students generally, being labeled as selfish and privileged. We also risk alienating large chunks of our membership through our inaction.

I have enjoyed my time in the student movement. I feel I have achieved many good things for students, and have made some friends that will last throughout my life. I wish everyone involved all the best for the future.

I would also like to commend Vice President, Sarah Helm, for her endless passion for the issues, and continuing commitment to students and social justice, and of course, for being a good friend.

Patrick Rooney
1998 NZUSA President

Vice President's Report

Sarah Helm



1998 was a landmark year for NZUSA, if for no other reason because the election of Patrick and myself brought about the end of successive years of Labour Party control of the national student body. Our lack of affiliation to the Labour Party, and in fact dislike for political party control over student unions, had many spin-offs in terms of the issues we worked on and in the way in which that we worked.

Before I report on the actual issues that were worked on, I must digress into the internal politics that often overshadowed the tangible work that Federation Office was trying to do.

Constituents

NZUSA is constantly overwhelmed by internal in fighting and attacks by its own members. 1998 was not different in this way. Notices of withdrawal, harassing correspondence, public attacks and sexist attitudes were the most common daily issues federation office was forced to work on, instead of the overwhelming issues that face students, education and the community.

Voluntary Student Membership provided a platform for the right to crow from. Calls were made to pare back NZUSA from its already bare bones, under the pretence that the organisation could not be afforded in a voluntary environment. Not surprisingly, the loudest calls came from those who showed the least interest and effort towards campaigning against VSM. It is my firm belief that these calls had naught to do with financial woes, and more to do with their alignment with free market values.

And the right used me as their target. Scapegoating their real dissatisfaction with NZUSA's policies and objects (of free education

and our commitment to work for societal change), they used the pre-existing sexist attitudes in some constituents to accuse me of incompetence. And although the majority of our constituents supported the more left wing and campaigning approach that we were using, they frequently allowed me to bear the brunt of this criticism. A reflection of the patriarchal and hierarchical nature of the organisation.

Representing Diverse Students

Federation Office also tried to increase its communication and democratic accountability to students and student groups. We were committed to trying to increase the level of effectiveness of the organisation through grass roots participation. We tried to advance the idea of a national voice for all students - therefore working with: PI students, environmental groups, queer student groups, education campaigners, post-grads, and such like. To some extent we succeeded. We started campaigns with these groups and provided them with national newsletters and meetings. This was met with paranoid resentment by some of the more territorial Presidents.

Unite to Fight the Right! Working with other national organisations.

Much of the first part of 1998 was spent building alliances with other like-minded organisations. We forged new links with trade unions, NGO's, women's organisations, the activist community, and international groups. The idea was that if we could work with these groups against the right wing agenda of privatisation, we would be more successful in our struggle for public education.

But many more fruits were borne from these new relationships. We jointly campaigned with these groups on as diverse issues as road privatisation, youth rights, the international student movement, the Multilateral Agreement on Investment through to the denial of summertime unemployment benefits for students. Students and NZUSA began to lose the public image of being self-interested and greedy as its national spokespeople and some of its constituents began to speak out on diverse issues.

Te Mana Akonga and Te Tiriti o Waitangi

The poor relationship with Te Mana Akonga at the start of 1998 was one of the most critical priorities Federation Office set themselves. By the end of 1998 one of Te Mana Akonga's own representatives was elected

NZUSA Co-President, a Memorandum of Understanding adopted, increased Tiriti work within NZUSA, a bi-cultural women's group formed, and many friendships blossomed.

Te Mana Akonga's good will and willingness to work with us, after so many years of colonial attitudes, was, to say the least, gracious. Meanwhile, Te Mana Akonga and their constituents continue to be underfunded, and unsupported by their dominating pakeha counterparts (including NZUSA). Something the Memorandum sets out for future NZUSA and Te Mana Akonga representatives to amend.

Women

The Women's Co-ordinator has written a separate account so I won't make additional comment, except to say that again women within the organisation were forced to fight for their right to be heard, and have representation.

Youth

NZUSA re-focussed on their commitment to youth at a national and constituent level. Campaigns on young workers rights, and youth representation were small but pivotal in the move to grow NZUSA's role in representing 'youth'.

In particular we worked with the National Youth Network to try and assist in their establishment. Tali Williams and the others in the NYN team showed amazing skill and commitment. As a result there is now a growing grass roots youth organisation.

Benefit Cuts

The Government launched a full-scale attack on beneficiaries in 1998, including student summertime unemployment benefits. We whipped up a backlash to this in conjunction with many other organisations. This struggle was one of the main time-consuming campaigns of the year. It was also one of the most heart-breaking, with students forced to resort to food-banks, and at least one call was picked up by an SJS office of a young woman being forced into prostitution as a result of the cuts. The Governments consistent attacks were blind, or perhaps uninterested, in these human costs.

The Government was still successful in their implementation of the cuts. I'm sure that the fight will continue into 1999.

countries and corporations in the world. Te Mana Akonga really led the way on this issue, and we followed them, alongside other campaigners around the world. Protest actions were advanced by Associations, and we furnished them with campaign materials.

International Student Movement

NZUSA pushed to form links with the Asian Students' Association, National Union of Students (Australia), the International Union of Students, Organisation of Continental and Latin American Students, and regional and national student unions around the world. The issues that we all hold common are not surprising given the global agenda of privatisation. The benefits of campaigning internationally are therefore very large.

Voluntary Student Membership

NZUSA, TMA and APSU worked really hard on this issue. We managed to achieve a back down on the enforced voluntary membership that was going to come about from the original legislation. This was one of our biggest victories.

The resulting legislation was a vast improvement, although still biased against compulsory membership.

The fate of students' associations is again in student hands.

Kia Kaha
In Solidarity

Sarah Helm
NZUSA Vice President 1998

Women and the Women's Co-ordinator

1998 Annual Report

Women

1998 was a year of overhaul for WECA and women involved in feminist politics within student associations around the country.

Disillusion of WECA and the development of TWFG

The Women's Education Coalition Aotearoa was formally dissolved after a controversial first meeting of the year. In February WECA fractured over how it was best to practice bi-cultural identity.

WECA, established in 1995 from the University Women's Information Network (UWIN) has had for its entire herstory a debate about its structure and relevance to the women of the National Maori University Students Association -Te Mana Akonga.

It was decided that, because of its structure and practice, WECA was not the forum to enable women from the two groups to work together, or women from APSU to be involved.

In July a new women's group was formed, the Tertiary Women's Focus Group (TWFG).

This new organisation incorporates in its structure a core-group made up of representatives from APSU, Te Mana Akonga and NZUSA.

The group also has begun to undertake steps to be in line with Tikanga Maaori.

Conferences/Hui

It was a busy year with meetings. Instead of the usual three meetings before NZUSA conference the women from the federation had an extra meeting to discuss its relationship with Te Mana Akonga this was held on the Upper Hutt College Marae.

September conference in Manawatu at Te Kupenga o Te Matauranga Marae was an opportunity to discuss new and old campaigns. **Campaigns**; *Body Image*, *Women and User Pays* and the retention of *Compulsory Membership* were planned for the 1999 enrolment period.

Thursdays in Black

This has been the most successful and outward looking campaign that the women of NZUSA have been involved with. The campaign grew extensively during the year.

With new T-shirts, pamphlets and posters the campaign attracted a lot of interest from other NGO's, women groups and the public.

Thanks also to Ange Jones for her voluntary co-ordination of the campaign during the year in tandem with the Women's C-ordinator.

Scholarship

The WECA scholarship became the **NZUSA Women's Scholarship** and was awarded to Auckland masters student Ruth Irwin. Ruth's work is looking at systems to measure Equal Educational Opportunities (EEO). Ruth presented her work to the September NZUSA conference.

Women's Co-ordinator

It was a busy year for the Women's Co-ordinator, Christina Rizos. A lot of her time was put into organising hui/conferences to further explore how women from NZUSA and Te Mana Akonga could develop a working relationship. Christina also spent time developing a relationship with the women from the Aotearoa Polytechnic Student's Union. (APSU)

Christina worked closely with the Women's Information Network (a network of women from national NGO's) in the writing of the Non-governmental report to the **Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women**.

Christina produced a number of publications for the federation. Christina produced a **Women's Resource Kit** at the beginning of the year and a **Student Parents Briefing paper/resource kit** later in the year.

Christina also wrote a number of submissions on behalf of women in NZUSA. These included the **Paid Parental Leave Bill, the Marital Property Amendment bill, the Code of Social and Family Responsibility and Conjugal Status bill**.

David Choat and Christina worked closely together on issues to do with the **Training Incentive Allowance (TIA)** and its interface with the student loans scheme. NZUSA, APSU jointly with the Wellington Peoples Resource Centre made an unsolicited submission to the Government's review of the scheme. Some of the recommendation's in this submission were taken into account by the government.

In July Christina was fortunate to attend the international conference **Winds of Change- Women and the Culture of Universities** in Sydney, Australia. Christina went also to the National Union of Students in Melbourne and spent a week networking the office there. The details of the trip are outlined in her report of the trip *The Full Story*.

Christina provided **training** to women on executives, presidents and executives in facilitation, gendered issues and feminism.

Progressive Taxation and Public Education

The education campaign re-focussed on what we wanted and not just what we were against. The campaign called out for a progressive taxation system and along with it fully funded publicly controlled education.

Workers Rights

The month of May brought combined student and union action on workers rights. May 15th, the anniversary of the destructive Employment Contracts Act. Actions combining music, marches and street occupations ensued, under the slogan of "UNITE".

Later in the year 'Workwise' was produced to encourage youth awareness of their working rights and trade unions. Some constituents chose not to order these insidious documents - but students seemed to love them, and they were snatched up wherever they were distributed.

Activism in Aotearoa & Liberation

NZUSA's commitment to its campus based and community activism was increased in 1998, and illustrated through its full day planning session for Education Action Groups in the 1998 Activism in Aotearoa, and later in the year. Throughout the year we consulted with activists and set out campaign plans with input from a wide cross-section of campus based activists and other outside organisations. We also produced an activist kit as a resource for training new activists on the basics.

Later in the year when it looked like AinA wouldn't go ahead Federation Office took this task up and began to organise it under the new name 'Liberation'.

Student Job Search

The Student Job Search staff were amazing, Lindsay and each of the SJS offices came through for students again. This is despite fears of the potential impacts of VSM on SJS, and each of their jobs.

Multilateral Agreement on Investment

This treaty aimed to increase the imperialist power of the more wealthy

Conclusion

1998 was a challenging year for women involved in the federation. However, the debates that were had internally have given rise to a commitment to focus on campaigns and visibility in the coming 1999 year.

By running campaigns on a national and local level it is hoped that the profile of women issues will rise and the position and experience of women partaking in tertiary education will improve.