

1922

AROUND THE WORLD IN 90 YEARS

1939

1968

2012

A short history of
Internationalism
in the National
Union of Students



national union of students

AROUND
THE WORLD
IN 90
YEARS



As NUS celebrates its 90th Anniversary, there will be a lot of fond memories shared, and old battle scars brandished, as we look back on some of the great campaigns students have been involved in, the impact NUS has had on the development of further and higher education in Britain, and the contributions our members and alumni have made to UK politics and society.

However we thought it would also be fitting to mark the occasion by recalling some of the NUS campaigns that went beyond our borders, and the times students have made an impact on the wider world, through presenting *A Short History of Internationalism in the National Union of Students*.

Since its foundation, NUS has been a movement rooted in values of internationalism. From the peace movements of the 1920s, to the Anti-Apartheid Movement in the 1980s, NUS has been at the forefront of campaigns for global justice.

This guide aims to provide a brief history of this, and to show the importance of students continuing to lead on issues of international injustice, as young people continue to campaign for peace, democracy, human rights, and justice across the world.

Dannie Grufferty
Vice President
(Society and Citizenship)
2011–12

Liam Burns
National President
2011–12

Emerging from the Shadow of War

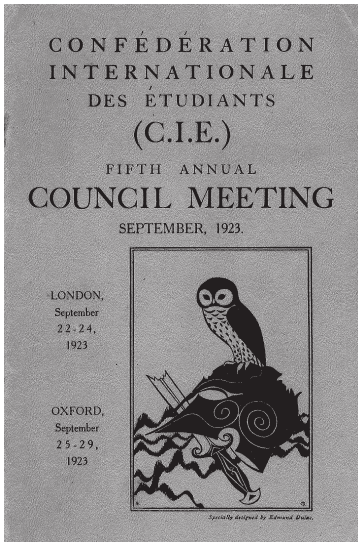
Internationalism was a defining value of the National Union of Students from the very start. The founders of NUS were ex-servicemen who returned from the trenches of the First World War convinced that harmonious international relations must be maintained at all costs if ‘the war to end all wars’ was to be anything other than a sad misnomer.

Iverson Macadam, the first President of the NUS and his contemporaries, had a defining vision; NUS would act as a crucial vehicle enabling students to co-operate and exchange ideas not just on a national, but on an international level. As the leaders of the future, those students involved would ensure that peaceful international relations remained of paramount importance. As Macadam summed up in a speech in September 1922;

“No one can fail to see how direct a bearing this national and international student co-operation must have on the great and pressing problems of reconstruction in Europe. If the students are co-operating today surely there is hope for tomorrow.”



Iverson Macadam
Founding President

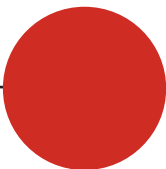


CIE Council document

Macadam did not envisage NUS as a campaigning organisation, but rather one which would be vital in ensuring that international relations remained peaceful and conflict would no longer be an option.

Another reason for the creation of NUS was to enable students from the United Kingdom to be formally represented at the 'Confédération Internationale des Étudiants' (CIE). The CIE had been established by French students in the aftermath of the war, and was intended to provide a platform for students from mainly European countries to meet regularly. However, the war still cast a shadow over international co-operation; many French delegates vehemently opposed German students joining the membership. It had been hoped that the involvement of the United Kingdom would counteract these feelings of animosity, but despite NUS encouraging the involvement of various countries by using their contacts throughout the Empire, it was not able to alter the French position.

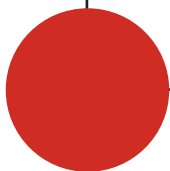
Throughout the ten years of NUS involvement in the CIE, this issue would continue to create tension and eventually led to disaffiliation after the NUS Executive concluded that such discrimination against German students was not in the spirit of internationalism and peace.



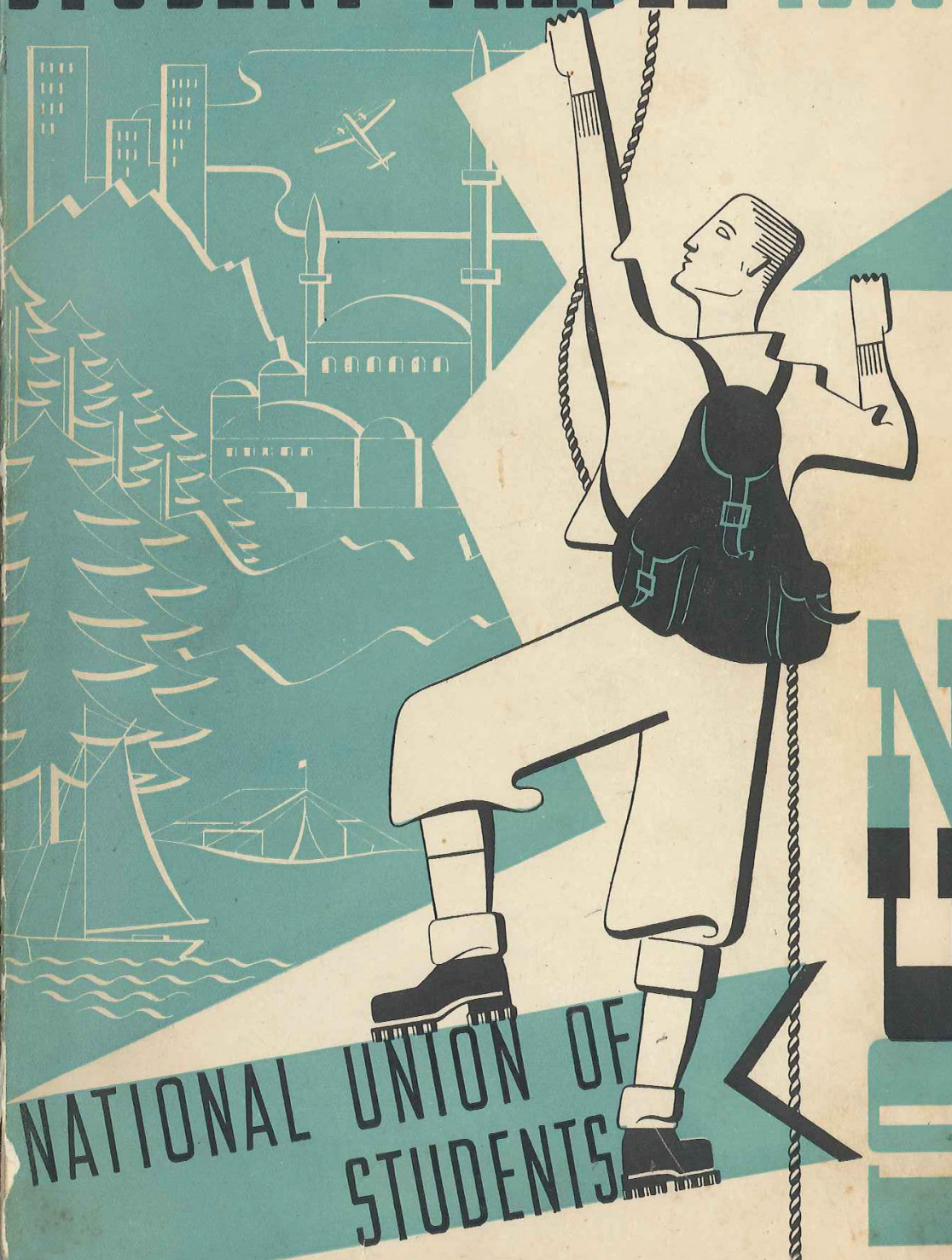
This meant that NUS largely decided to concentrate on educational and travel issues. Under the mantle of NUS, exchanges, cheap rail travel, walking holidays and language courses were offered to students on an international basis. By 1930 NUS had helped make international travel a growing trend amongst students.

Many students' unions also maintained links to the International Student Service organisation. This played a key part in raising money for international causes as diverse as a relief operation for students affected by the 1928 earthquakes which struck Plovdiv in Bulgaria, and a fund to support student refugees fleeing Germany after the Nazi takeover in 1933.

Many students in the 1930s, influenced as they were by the horrors of the First World War, held strong pacifist convictions. One of the most famous manifestations of this came in February 1933 when the Oxford Union debating society passed the motion 'This House will in no circumstances fight for its King and Country'.



STUDENT TRAVEL 1939



NATIONAL UNION OF
STUDENTS



Ralph Blumenau

NUS International VP

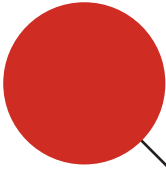
his family had fled the Nazi's
in the late thirties

This result was hugely controversial, receiving world-wide publicity and shocking many of the older generation. Students' unions across the country followed suit, in attempts to pass similar motions, with students in Manchester, Leicester, Aberystwyth and at the LSE, amongst other places passing versions of the 'Oxford Pledge'.

These votes were widely followed internationally, and Winston Churchill even argued in *The Gathering Storm* that such debates had influenced Adolf Hitler's foreign policy, convincing him (wrongly) that British students would refuse to fight in any coming war.

As the Second World War approached, NUS therefore found itself in an agonising position regarding international affairs.

Whilst some members wished NUS to take a non-political position and concentrate directly on educational issues, others wanted their National Union to speak out about the injustices of war and the consequences of another conflict. By contrast others were now convinced that fighting the threat of fascism was essential and highly supportive of the war.



Broadly NUS tried to distance itself from adopting a political position; however, the 1940 Conference voted to condemn the war. This decision was partly a result of the fact that Communist delegates followed the Party line; to oppose the 'imperialist war', during the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union.

This alarmed many members of the establishment, and NUS Trustees, including former President Ivison Macadam. He attempted to shut the organisation down for the duration of the war, and a lengthy legal dispute was only resolved when the entire National Executive resigned and sought re-election.

Fortunately for good relations within NUS (as well as the Allied war effort), the Nazi-Soviet Pact proved short lived.

Despite the political differences amongst the membership, NUS staff did contribute to the running of the war in an unexpected way. Before the war began, Ivison Macadam, who was then Director of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, had been secretly tasked with setting up a Ministry of Information, to co-ordinate wartime propaganda, using his links with NUS to covertly recruit staff for the new department. When war broke out, NUS' staff resigned *en masse* to work on the Whitehall war effort (sadly post-war Governments have not proved quite so eager to put out NUS messages).

Another consequence of the war was that NUS' membership became more and more diverse, as young people from across Europe sought safety in Britain. In 1941 it was decided that 17 November would be 'International Students' Day' to celebrate and recognise the continued collaboration of students from different nationalities. The date commemorates the execution and arrest of Czech student leaders at the University of Prague by the Nazis on 17 November 1939.

European Unity?

In the years immediately following the Second World War students were seen as vitally important in efforts to rebuild a shattered Europe and sustain a lasting peace; NUS was taken extremely seriously, with representatives frequently being consulted by world leaders on trips abroad.

Stanley Jenkins, President from 1949-51, recalled being invited to the Élysée Palace for lunch with French President Vincent Auriol whilst on a trip to Paris. Upon arriving at Sofia Railway Station during a visit to Bulgaria, he found the entire Cabinet waiting as a welcoming party.

Amidst a post-war determination to make renewed commitments to build successful international organisations, such as the United Nations and the then Council of Europe, NUS helped to establish the International Union of Students (IUS).

Despite initial hopes that the IUS could present a united front, unlike the pre-war CIE, the organisation soon fell victim to Cold War divisions.



**FORWARD
FOR OUR
FUTURE**



**WORLD YOUTH
CONFERENCE 1945**



The IUS became increasingly Soviet dominated, becoming, according to Fred Jarvis, NUS President from 1952-4, 'in effect, a student branch of the Cominform' dedicated to pushing the official Stalinist line. At IUS events, NUS representatives often found themselves arguing with people like Alexander Shelepin, one of Stalin's chief associates, and later head of the KGB.

In 1946 the Scottish Union of Students (then a separate body to NUS) disaffiliated in disgust due to IUS failing to condemn the Communist coup in Czechoslovakia. Other NUS leaders were also frustrated with the IUS' lack of political will but broadly wanted to remain affiliated in an effort to show support for internationalism, and to change the organisation from within.

Fred Jarvis described the divisions over whether to stay involved with the IUS as 'deep and almost life threatening' for NUS, but eventually after a national referendum was held, NUS decided to disaffiliate in 1951.

Despite these difficulties in establishing a united international student organisation, NUS continued international work, mainly through continuing to promote international travel. During the 1950s, under its pioneering Travel Manager, Harry Baum, the NUS travel company provided tours, organise student exchanges and acted as host for visiting international students.

Furthermore, in 1962 NUS developed a pioneering scheme that encouraging students to volunteer their skills in developing countries in partnership with Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO). Initially NUS itself sent volunteers abroad, but was forced to abandon this due to a lack of funds in 1966, compensating by then building closer links with VSO.

Additionally, 'World Refugee Year' held in 1960, saw students across the country fundraising for organisations such as War On Want and Oxfam. NUS' solidarity with refugees has continued into recent times through support for activist organisations such as Student Action for Refugees (STAR), and, alongside individual students' unions campaigning on behalf of asylum seekers facing unfair deportation.

The New Radicals

In the 1960s protests against the Vietnam war, radicalised both students and NUS, culminating in more openly politicised campaigns, particularly after the election of Jack Straw, then a leader of the Radical Student Alliance, as President in 1969. NUS has played a huge part in the politicalisation of consecutive generations, which saw many echoes in 2003 when tens of thousands of students marched in protest against the Iraq War.

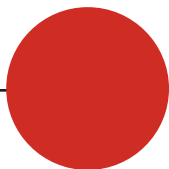
NUS travels took on an increasingly political edge, with NUS Vice-President Tony Klug making a high profile visit to South-Africa in 1970 where he pledged NUS' support for the National Union of South African Students' struggle, and met with young black leaders, including the then internationally unknown Steve Biko.

Another memorable international trip stemmed from the decision to take part in the 1978 World Youth and Student Festival. A large British delegation, headed by the then NUS President, Trevor Philips, and the then Chair of the British Youth Council, Peter Mandelson, controversially travelled to Cuba, and attended the Soviet-dominated event, to make the case for greater human rights within the Soviet bloc.

Despite initial criticism for attending, the British delegation attracted much media attention when they managed to pass motions criticising the human rights records both of the Soviet Union and of the United States.

NUS played a large part in the foundations of the European Students' Union; we were founder members in 1982 of WESIB, which became ESIB in 1992 and ESU in 2005 - before that we had annual "European Meetings" with both the West and the East. It was rare at the time for any group at all to get the opportunity to try bridge the people of East and West Berlin, but NUS somehow managed it.

The Festival's Havana venue was quite appropriate, as NUS took a longstanding interest in Latin America, working to show solidarity with the workers' movements there. Many students' unions played leading roles in the Chile Solidarity Campaign, raising awareness of the cause of Chilean workers and activists, facing persecution under Augusto Pinochet's brutal dictatorship. Such was students' interest, that Warwick students' union, for example, elected an Officer 'Responsible for Chilean Affairs' throughout the 1970s.





Free Mandela!

As well as being NUS' 90th Anniversary, this year also sees the 90th birthday of the African National Congress (ANC); An appropriate reminder that students' unions supported the Anti-Apartheid movement long before it became politically mainstream (or indeed fashionable). The Nelson Mandela Foundation records that while in prison, Mandela was given honorary membership and elected an honorary President at Leeds, Sheffield, Strathclyde, University College London, the LSE, and the University of London amongst others.

NUS Conference elected Nelson Mandela Honorary Vice-President in 1976, and symbolically invited him to speak in 1983, although for obvious reasons the ANC's Chief Representative in Britain had to address Conference on his behalf.

A rash of college/university rooms, halls, and bars were named after ANC leaders, and NUS named its own headquarters 'Nelson Mandela House'.

Given NUS had been criticised in some sections of the press for 'supporting terrorists' with such a gesture, it was wonderfully ironic that when the organisation moved offices in 2006 they then found themselves based in 'Mandela Street'.



Poster by NUS designer
Jeremy Twyman
said to be the final straw
for Barclays

Students' Anti-Apartheid actions also increasing centred around encouraging individual Universities and companies to divest from Apartheid South Africa. One of the best known examples took place at Liverpool Guild of Students, in 1969 where a group of students occupied the University's Senate House, in protest at their institution's South African investments. Ten students were sent down as a result, but the University eventually divested. This protest drew national attention due to the involvement of the Bishop of Winchester's son, Jon Snow, now better known for reading, than making, headlines.

One of the most successful divestment campaigns at a national level, took place in the 1980s, when NUS campaigned for students to boycott Barclays Bank, until they withdrew their investments from the Apartheid regime.

When Barclays were subsequently forced to cease investment, citing NUS' stance as a key factor, it was recognised as one of the major victories on the road to the eventual dismantling of Apartheid.

In more recent times The Ethical and Environmental Department housed within NUS Services, has developed an effective constructive engagement policy in an effort to influence the practices of students' unions suppliers. The development of NUS Extra cards has meant NUS has also been able to establish direct contact with those in positions of power within multi-national companies. Campaigns have included: persuading Coors Beer to apologise for and relinquish links to homophobic American think tanks; encouraging GlaxoSmithKline to relinquish its patents on antiretroviral drugs in sub-Saharan Africa; a sustained dialogue with Coca-Cola to ensure better treatment of workers and improvements in environmental practices at bottling plants in India; and a high profile Nestle campaign which saw a boycott in protest against the company's aggressive marketing of baby milk substitutes in Sub-Saharan Africa. NUS and students' unions around the country have been highly influential in exposing the unethical practices of some of the world's biggest corporations, playing a leading role in publicising crucial facts on various big brands.



The Society and Citizenship zone, working with liberation campaigns and students' unions, aims to support students to stand in solidarity with students in both their local communities, and across the world. NUS has a proud history of standing up for the dispossessed and disenfranchised, and we hope the next 90 years brings more of the same.

NUS' proud history of internationalist values is still influences the present day, with the student movement continuing to campaign on causes around the world.

From improved links with the European Students' Union, to the NUS LGBT campaign's actions for equality for LGBT people across the world, NUS continues to break new ground internationally.

With students continuing to stand up for the dispossessed and disenfranchised from Swaziland to Syria, the student movement's reach will continue to be truly global.

Over the last year, students and young people have risked their lives in the protest movements symbolised by the mass demonstrations on Tahrir Square.

There has never been a better time to celebrate NUS' proud history of internationalism, and to look forward to the next 90 years, bringing similar challenges and hopefully even greater successes.

Acknowledgements

The Society and Citizenship zone committee would like to thank a few people for their help in putting together this booklet to celebrate our 90th birthday. Particular thanks should go to Mike Day, Director of the (United) Nations, and author of *'Respected, not Respectable: A Short History of the National Union of Students'*, for providing the content. We would also like to thank Harriet Rowley and Sarah Wayman from Social Policy, Lisa Pool from the Communications team, and Jamie Agombar from NUS Services for their help in putting this booklet together. A final thanks to Joe Oliver from the NEC Block of 15, who kindly edited the booklet and provided some additional historical anecdotes of his own.





THE AFRICAN UNION'S POLICY ON THE PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT

The African Union (AU) is a continental organization that was established in 2002, replacing the Organization of African States (OAS). The AU's primary objective is to promote the economic, political, and social development of the African continent.

The AU's policy on the protection of the environment is a key component of its overall development strategy. The AU recognizes that the environment is a vital resource for the continent's development and that its protection is essential for sustainable growth.

The AU's policy on the protection of the environment is based on the following principles:

1. The environment is a common heritage of all Africans and should be protected for the benefit of present and future generations.

2. The protection of the environment is a responsibility of all Africans and should be integrated into all development activities.

3. The protection of the environment is a priority for the AU and should be given high priority in all development activities.

4. The protection of the environment is a key component of the AU's overall development strategy and should be integrated into all development activities.

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