

AUFA Communicator

Acadia University Faculty Association Newsletter

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The AUFA President Communicates

Five AUFA colleagues and I travelled to Antigonish on February 1, joining 25 other picketers who had travelled from universities across the country. One after another, the flying and driving picketers expressed the support of their associations for our colleagues at St. Francis-Xavier University in their struggle for a fair collective agreement. This outpouring of support was hugely appreciated by StFXAUT members and really brought home to me how fortunate we are to have the CAUT Defence Fund at our backs. The giant cheque for \$1,000,000 unrolled by Brian Brown, head of the Defence Fund, may seem merely symbolic and a great photo-op, but it is also a real commitment. It is a promise of financial aid for StFXAUT and other dues-paying locals for as long as their strike continues. Without that support many locals would either quickly go bankrupt or be able to give their members only minimal strike pay. The Fund also brings in colleagues from other universities to give moral and financial support to the striking members, reminding them that they are not alone in their fight. If we are forced to go down the same path as StFXAUT in the future, AUFA too will be able to rely

on CAUT to come to our aid with weekly flying pickets and generous strike pay; in fact, some part-timers from our last strike remember they earned more on the picket line than in the classroom!

In January, I attended the annual CAUT Presidents' Forum in Ottawa. The conference was set up as a series of informal talks and break-out sessions on topics including workload, pensions and benefits, balancing interests of diverse memberships, mobilizing members, and the corporatization of universities. It seems that we share the same basic challenges, whether we are from a small or large institution, and however bad you think things are for your association, there is always another with a worse story to tell! The most sobering message nationally continues to be the federal government's attack on labour, and we will watch for an upcoming report being prepared by CAUT on the repercussions of Bill C-377 for unionized faculty associations. Early estimates are that if the bill is passed in the Senate it will require an estimated 1000 hours per local for compliance. Even more worrying is speculation there will be efforts to make it illegal for employ-

The AUFA President Communicates (cont'd)

ers to deduct union dues from all members of the bargaining unit, as they now must.

Extra work is something we are already concerned about on our campus; we are all stretched to the limit, and that feeling is also shared in the AUFA office. The increasing number of per course appointments has brought with it an avalanche of paperwork, all of which has to be reviewed in order to protect our members. Our current records management system is no longer adequate to the task and the Executive has formed a sub-committee to come up with proposals for improvements. We are working towards the creation of a customized database, and ultimately envisage acquiring our own server to store and protect the data. In preparation for this, Jane has been upgrading her computer skills because much of the data entry and management will fall on her shoulders. We hope to have plans finalized by the end of this semester and will give a full update then.

At the January meeting of AUFA we took our first steps towards holding general meetings at times convenient to all faculty, including those with parental duties. Unfortunately, it is still inevitable that the times chosen will conflict with some courses. This is a problem that will be solved only when the administration agrees to block off a timeslot for meetings in the course schedule; we have been in discussions with them this year to make sure such a mid-day slot will be reserved for regular meetings of campus-wide importance, such as the monthly AUFA general meetings. In the meantime, the Executive is considering an amendment to the AUFA Constitution to give future Executives more flexibility in setting meeting times.

I look forward to seeing some new faces at the next general meeting on Thursday March 7, 11:30—1:00, BAC 244.

Respectfully submitted,
Gillian Poulter
AUFA President



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Report on CAUT Council

In late November, Gillian Poulter and I attended the Council meeting of the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) held in Ottawa. In attendance at this 73rd meeting of Council were delegates from over 70 faculty associations, each of whom had the right to vote on the many policy issues that arose during three days of meetings. My report will focus in particular on the sessions and issues likely to be of particular interest to *Communicator* readers.

In his opening remarks, CAUT President Wayne Peters warned Council delegates about the Harper government's ongoing attack on the independence of unions. The most recent front in this attack is Bill C-377, which uses the federal tax code to interfere in the provincially regulated sphere of labour relations. The Bill forces all unions to disclose detailed information about how they are run, thereby placing an administrative burden on unions big and small, and undermining Canadians' right to association. How reasonable is this move? Peters points out in a recent [article](#) that "Unions are democratic organizations accountable to their members, not to the general public. Financial statements are already open to all their members through audited statements and regularly scheduled membership meetings, and currently comply with a host of reporting obligations to the Canada Revenue Agency and provincial regulators." Wayne Peters and others who have a national perspective see such moves as part of a general anti-union, pro-business agenda that is on the rise across North America.

Other speakers at the Council meeting provided further context. Of particular relevance was the panel discussion on "The Attack on Labour and what we can do about it," with representatives from the Canadian Labour Congress and the American Federation of Teachers. We heard from our American colleagues of a well-funded and well-organized stealth campaign by pro-business lobbyists and neoliberal thinktanks to undermine the ability workers have to come together to negotiate the terms of their employment. In Wisconsin, in Indiana, in Michigan, in 22 other states, so-called "right to work" legislation is now in place. Given this anti-union environment, perhaps it's not surprising to hear that only 12% of US workers are protected by a collective agreement. Could that happen here? If so, why should we care? Speakers testified to the fact that one of the drivers of prosperity, of equity, and of workplace peace in Canada has been unionization, whereby groups of workers come together to negotiate with employers in good faith, and agree to work together without disruption for the life of a contract. Before unions, wildcat strikes were a regular occurrence in Canada. If we look at what's been happening with the teachers in Ontario, perhaps labour strife will again become the norm if governments continue to try to block the right of citizens to bargain collectively.

On a more upbeat note, we heard the results of the annual Harris/Decima [poll](#) commissioned by CAUT. Most Canadians ranked postsecondary education as a priority. The poll found many respondents worried about access to postsecondary education; they say governments aren't doing enough to ensure affordable tuition levels that won't burden students with a large debt. A majority of those polled expressed a willingness to pay higher taxes to ensure a high quality university system that provides equitable access. This finding is particularly relevant to us in Nova Scotia, where government support for universities is the lowest of any province – having now dropped to below 45% of university operating revenue [see *CAUT Almanac*, [p.3](#)].

Report on CAUT Council (cont'd)

When asked what should be done if governments cut funding further, 52% of Canadians polled said universities should cut the cost of administration . . . rather than increase class sizes (12%) or cut salaries (13%). There's an increasing cynicism out there: the poll found that "Most people believe universities put the bottom line ahead of providing a good quality education." The heartening part for faculty to hear is that "teachers and instructors are most trusted to have the best interest of students in mind." As we move forward in AUFA and with our colleagues at other faculty associations across the country, we should keep in mind that Canadians see us as the moral centre of the university. Only by sticking together will we be able to protect the integrity of our institutions – by resisting the federal government's attack on labour, the provincial government's withdrawal of resources, and the tendency of administrators to balk at spending money on what matters most: hiring enough qualified academic staff, and paying them according to regional and national norms.

Respectfully submitted,
Stephen Ahern
AUFA Vice President



Report on CAUT Librarians' Conference

In late October, almost 100 academic librarians gathered in Ottawa for "Contested Terrain: Shaping the future of Academic Librarianship". This conference is normally held once every two years, so kudos should go to the organizing committee and the CAUT Librarians Committee, chaired by our own Erin Patterson, for organizing this "extra" conference on this very relevant and current topic.

The conference covered topics from neoliberalism and corporate management of educational institutions, to deskilling and outsourcing of the work of academic librarians, to issues regarding the direction of associations and leadership within the profession. The conference attendees, organizers, and speakers were all active participants throughout the two day conference and shared a real passion for libraries, librarians, advocacy, and the larger issues of human rights, labour rights, and social justice.

The conference started early on Friday with welcoming statements from CAUT President Wayne Peters, Executive Director James Turk, and Librarian Committee Chair Erin Patterson. Mitch Freedman, former President of the American Library Association (ALA) engaged the audience in

Report on CAUT Librarians' Conference (cont'd)

his keynote address focusing on issues past and present in both the ALA and the Canadian Library Association (CLA) and shared thoughts regarding tactics in making changes from within organizations.

In the next session "Who Speaks for Libraries and Librarians?" Lisa Sloniowski (York University) and Jennifer Dekker (University of Ottawa) critically examined the role of leadership in the library community, with particular focus on how librarians are trained/prepared to become administrators and on both a history and a critical examination of issues with the CLA.

One of the most interesting and engaging sessions of the conference came from outside the academic realm. Maureen O'Reilly, President of CUPE Local 4948, illustrated how the staff messaged and mobilized support in the city of Toronto as they endured not only a strike but broader attacks on libraries by the Rob Ford municipal government. Maureen provided examples of promotional materials and videos that were entertaining and poignant in raising the profile and value of libraries, librarians, and library workers in communities.

There have been a number of well known extreme cases of attacks on academic libraries within Canada. Two librarians from those institutions gave firsthand accounts of their situations, including attempts to replace librarians with PhD interns in larger research institutions. They shared their efforts in how they worked together to battle these difficulties in their workplaces.

The day ended with librarians breaking out in small groups to share their own experiences of corporate type management in the areas of impact on funding, terms and conditions of work, management practices, hiring and promotion practices, and collegial decision-making processes.

Day two started with a panel discussion on the major responsibilities in academic librarians' lives: teaching, research, and service. Librarians from UNB, MSVU, and Concordia shared their experiences in each of these areas. Professor Sam Trosow and a recent graduate from Western University then discussed what's going on in library schools, including the newer trend of the Progressive Librarian Guild movement. Dr. Trosow also kindly provided an extra session giving the group an update on copyright developments over the lunch hour.

The afternoon was back to small group discussions focusing on solutions to the problems discussed in the previous day's group discussions. Groups brainstormed to identify how we can combat the problems within the workplace, individually, through our associations, through CAUT, and through our professional organizations. The groups then presented their recommendations to everyone.

Finally, Dr. Toni Samek from the University of Alberta ended the conference with a thought-provoking synopsis of the conference themes. One section of her talk that hit home was when she presented examples of job descriptions illustrating that we sometimes don't help ourselves in insuring high standards and expectations for the profession.

Report on CAUT Librarians Committee (cont'd)

Anthony Pash and Jennifer Richard were sponsored by AUFA to attend and very much appreciated the opportunity to think, share, and participate in this great conference.

Respectfully submitted,
Jennifer Richard and Anthony Pash

Lois Valley-Fischer Award for Democratic Student Citizenship

March 23 at 12:00 noon is this year's deadline for receipt of applications for the Lois Valley-Fischer Award for Democratic Student Citizenship. Applications should be mailed to Jane Longley, AUFA Office, Acadia University or dropped off at Huggins Science Hall, room 211.

Please note that the nominators are responsible for providing information and comments in support of their nominee, which are the basis upon which the decision is to be made. To make a nomination, the nominator will submit an original letter outlining the reasons why the nominee should be considered. The letter must be signed and accompanied by at least four signatures of others supporting the application (for a total of five signatures).

AUFA has instituted this annual award, valued at \$2,000, for a student in her or his final year of undergraduate study at Acadia. The Lois Valley-Fischer Award for Democratic Student Citizenship recognizes the contributions of a senior baccalaureate student who has contributed to the quality of democratic discourse, critical thought, and legitimate contestation in campus or community life, and who has demonstrated leadership in defending student political rights and the interests of disadvantaged groups.

Nominations may be made by students and/or AUFA members. Award recipients will be selected by a committee of AUFA members, and will be presented with the award at the Association's annual general meeting in April. In addition to the cash component, recipients will be awarded a memento, and her or his name will be embossed on a plaque in a permanent location in the Student Union Building.

Check out our website at:
www.acadiafaculty.ca



Dates to Remember

February 28

The URC shall complete its work . . . [for] Tenure (Professor), Tenure/Promotion (Associate), Promotion (Associate), Continuing Appointment and Promotion (Librarian II), Promotion (Librarian III), [and] Promotion (Instructor II) [by] 28 February. . . . [Art. 12.41]

March 1

Elections [for Sabbatical Leave Committee] shall take place annually on or before 1 March. . . . [Art. 24.14 (c)]

March 15

The Employer shall mail Offers of Employment by . . . 15 March for the Spring/Summer Intersessions. . . . [Art. 11.11 (b)]

March 31

The URC shall complete its work . . . [for] Promotion (Full Professor), Promotion (Librarian IV) [by] 31 March. . . . [Art. 12.41]

The President shall communicate the Board's decisions on . . . Tenure, Combined Tenure & Promotion to Associate Professor, and Promotion to Associate Professor - no later than 31 March. . . . [Art. 12.75(b)]

The President shall communicate the Board's decisions on . . . Joint continuing appointment and promotion/promotion to Librarian III no later than 31 March. . . . [Art. 51.75 (a)]

Unspent [Travel and Professional Allowance] funds revert to the appropriate Dean or University Librarian on 31 March of each year but at the same time departments may submit requests for the use of same. . . . Art. 25.54]

April 1

The Employee shall have to make a formal request prior to 1 April preceding the approved period of Leave for any major changes to the Employee's plan for Leave. . . . [Art. 24.24]

A more comprehensive listing of dates can be found on AUFA's website: www.acadiafaculty.ca/calendar.

Editorial Policy

The *AUFA Communicator* is the newsletter of the Acadia University Faculty Association (AUFA) and is intended to keep its members and the Acadia community up to date and informed. The *AUFA Communicator* is published quarterly during the academic year and serves the following purposes:

1. to provide a means for the free exchange of ideas, views, and issues relevant to AUFA and the Acadia community
2. to provide feedback and information useful to AUFA to maintain its effective operation in fulfilling the objectives of AUFA and its membership
3. to provide documentary records of matters pertaining to AUFA
4. to serve all the functions of a newsletter

The Communicator Committee, under the direction of the AUFA Executive, takes responsibility for the contents of the *AUFA Communicator*. The opinions expressed in authored articles are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the Communicator Committee. **We encourage your contributions (letters, articles, article summaries, and other pertinent information).** Anonymous material will not be considered for publication; however, under special circumstances, the *AUFA Communicator* may agree to withhold the author's name. The Communicator Committee retains the right to edit and/or reject contributed material.

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Have any ideas for future newsletter articles? Drop us a note and let us know what's been going on.