

Faculty Times

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President's Report

Reflections on living in interesting times

By Regna Darnell

At the three-quarters mark of my term as UWOFA president, I find myself reflecting on the place of the union in the ongoing life of our members. I have come to have enormous respect for the complexity and overall effectiveness of what we do. Despite the very different standpoints and priorities across our membership, we do, for the most part, suspend absolute self-interest and proceed in a spirit of consensus and compromise.

Full-time faculty seem to understand that both a standard of fairness and the burden on their

own working conditions by contract faculty with limited duties beyond the classroom require serious attention to the salary, benefits and workload arrangements for contract faculty. Many contract faculty live on what they are paid for their teaching and many strive to sustain a research profile. If we really believe our own rhetoric – and I do – teaching, research and service are inextricably linked. Our colleagues are not treated equally, although every collective agreement has offered some redress. We have been fairly successful on issues of job security, although we have not solved the problem of graduate students hired to do the work of our bargaining unit.

Most of us can see two sides to this story. We need clearer mechanisms for how to meet the need of programs while preserving the rights of members. We need to be sure that graduate expansion does not come at the price of a two-tier faculty and an expanded and unrecognized workload increase for some.

Our biggest success this year was the last-minute aversion of a strike by the Librarians and Archivists' bargaining unit. By sticking to our guns and using the media effectively, we obtained a much-improved contract, while allowing the Administration to meet some of its key objectives. This is the way effective bargaining is supposed to work.

Many members were upset by UWOFA support of the bus drivers' strike just after our UWOFA-LA settlement. The bus drivers agreed not to cross our picket lines if we went on strike. The effect of this solidarity on both students and Administration was electrifying. No buses on campus was unacceptable. This was a, if not the, key piece in our ability to obtain a settlement.

Consequently, we acted to repay this debt, partly in expectation of needing their support again during faculty negotiations. The Administration painted us as the bad guys in the eyes of the students when

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we opposed (only) one of their alternative transportation plans – the one where the university officially sponsored its employees to do the work of striking bus drivers. Most of us acted privately to get students where they needed to be. I remind all members that strikes are not supposed to be fun or convenient – that’s why they work.

As we begin negotiations for the faculty contract, I urge each of you to remain resolute. This will vastly decrease the likelihood of a strike, or its length if it comes to that. However you personally assess the lasting effects of the recent financial upheaval, faculty at Western deserve to be treated similarly to faculty elsewhere in the Bovey Six, our customary comparators. The settlements that are being signed off now in Ontario are surprisingly good in financial terms. At a recent CAUT conference, I was invited to talk about Western's crying poor. We are famous, or perhaps better infamous, for the intransigence of our Administration. Unlike virtually every other Ontario university, Western lost nothing to pension obligations. The entire risk is taken by our members. Unsurprisingly, retirement or early retirement does not look

attractive. Moreover, Western says little about how much of the 2008 loss has been recovered.

Faculty can and should set a standard for employment at Western. If we cannot recruit and retain top-calibre faculty, the reputation of the institution will decline rapidly. Despite the tight job market, there are already worrying signs that this is happening. Economic factors

**Western must
recruit and
retain top
faculty.**

impinging on faculty salary, benefits and workload necessarily respond to external circumstances. Our mobility is not restricted to the local employment scene.

Let me turn now to the disquieting fact that a small proportion of our members do not think the union has a positive effect on the quality of faculty employment at Western or that UWOFA does any serious work beyond periodic revisions to the Collective Agreement. Most of the time, however, negotiations are

not in the foreground. We provide workshops, mentoring and professional advice to members, most recently a workshop on aboriginal equity co-sponsored by the UWOFA Equity Committee and the Office of the Provost. There are common interests, as there sometimes should be.

Many of our members meet the Association face-to-face through the Grievance Committee. Sadly, the work of this committee has grown exponentially over the last few years. Cases seem to have become more contentious, less easily resolved without the intervention of an arbitrator. Nonetheless, there is also an effective working relationship between our grievance team and human resources. Those who seek out the Grievance Committee and are impressed by its services often choose to get involved in some other capacity, thereby strengthening the collective voice of the faculty.

The Association is only as effective as its members make it – by their participation, feedback and engagement. I urge each of you to think seriously about what is at stake for you and for all of us.

Regna Darnell is UWOFA president.

A Clash of narratives?

By L. Graham Smith

Should I stay or should I go? These lyrics from the Clash reflect academic career decisions at UWO at several junctures: initial hiring (should I come here or go somewhere else?), mid-career (can I get my position converted to tenure-track without a job offer from elsewhere? Do I have another job offer to secure a raise in my salary?), and career end (can I afford to retire yet?). Should I stay or should I go is a question that directly reflects faculty hiring practices, wages and pensions here at UWO. As we head into a new collective bargaining agreement, it is also a question contingent on which central narrative one accepts as the fiscal reality facing UWOFA and the administration as they begin the bargaining process.

The administration's narrative

For the past year or so, the UWO administration has sought to use the financial events of fall 2008 as a springboard for its defining construct: the university is in dire financial crisis and fiscal constraint (especially in the “discretionary” areas of hiring, salaries and benefits) is a necessity. The central basis of the narrative is that revenues are in

decline and costs are in the ascendancy. Constraint, especially in “discretionary” areas, is required and we should all rally around the purple and white standard of collective sacrifice. Any salary increases should be pegged to 1.5% as anything more would be immoral in times of such perceived collective fiscal crisis.

In a recent UWOFA Bargaining Bulletin ([Vol. 4, #1 February 2010](#)) the deficiencies of this narrative were exposed. Irrespective of the causes and effects (whether actual, perceived or media-hyped), the world has not come to an end and effective organizations have both adjusted and adapted. In Ontario, other universities operating under the same policy guidelines and funding formulas have managed to provide raises of 3.15% on top of the salaries that still exceed those at UWO despite previous assurances that UWO would achieve parity with the others of its comparator group. Western has not narrowed the gap in salaries with its comparator institutions over the past contract: it has merely arrested the decline. The administration seeks to use its poverty mantra as a justifi-

cation for limiting salary raises to 1.5%, a figure which will widen the salary gap between UWO and other universities, not close it. Perhaps Maclean's will add a category for “best mid-career salary gap”. That's an indicator where UWO will flourish.

In addition, other universities in Ontario with defined benefit pension plans are having to offset losses in benefits that the employer at UWO does not have to concern itself with as our pension plan is a defined contribution plan: the risk is borne by the members who contribute and not the employer. Not only are pension plans better elsewhere, those benefits are in addition to salary gains, not a justification for their suppression.

So UWO pleads poverty and crisis but its comparator institutions still find the ways and means to value employees, staff and especially the faculty, as partners in building future strategic growth. At UWO, we get new buildings. No money exists for discretionary items, like salaries, but more buildings, well we've got them. Ah, but those monies come from different sources. Why? It's a simple

question but it cuts straight to the heart of the administration's narrative. Money exists for buildings at UWO but not necessarily for people. Well some people. It appears some would envisage a strategic growth strategy that has maximum flexibility with respect to salary:

more limited-duties, part-time and contract "teachers", a few star research types for profiling and media rankings and a nice centrally planned and administered campus. None of the inconvenience of collegial inefficiencies and Town Hall dog and pony shows, no pesky

irrelevant subjects that don't have big grant programs and no questioning of imposed discipline.

Should I stay or should I go?

L. Graham Smith is an associate professor in the Department of Geography.

The CAUT Defence Fund and you

By Albert Katz

Among the benefits of being unionized is that one has access to provisions before one's provincial Labour Relations Board, including the right to grievance procedures and the right to strike. Strikes in Canadian universities are fairly rare and not usually of long duration. But this is not always the case. In the late 1970s there were two long strikes in Quebec (1976, at Laval, and 1976-1977, at L'Université du Québec à Montreal) over basic issues such as academic freedom, promotion and tenure procedures and sabbatical rights. These were long and bitter strikes, lasting over three months in each case.

If it hadn't been apparent beforehand, these events made it clear to university faculty associations across Canada that

any single faculty association was unlikely to have the resources to adequately promote just and equitable negotiating aims without an insurance policy which member associations could call upon if the needs were to arise. In 1978 over a dozen Canadian faculty associations banded together with the aim of providing unionized Canadian academic staff with a unified strike fund.

The basic purpose of the fund, like insurance policies generally, is to provide a safety net and prevent catastrophic financial loss. To this end the fund provides strike benefits to associations while members are engaged in a strike or lock-out and experiencing loss of salary. These benefits are paid as a grant to the association, to be used at

the local union's discretion, usually as strike pay (which is non-taxable) for individual union members involved in the work action. Strike benefits are currently set at \$80 per calendar day, with payments starting on the fourth calendar day of the strike or lock-out. For a bargaining unit as large as UWOPA, this insurance would provide to our union for redistribution over \$780,000.00/week.

In addition to this primary purpose, the Defence Fund can provide other benefits including: (a) financial assistance to member associations which incur costs of mediation and/or interest arbitration in settlement of contract negotiations, (b) financial assistance to member associations which incur costs in prosecuting employer actions

alleged to be unfair labour practices or failures to bargain in good faith, (c) assistance to defend the interests of those member associations whose collective bargaining and/or strike rights are removed or restricted by legislation, (d) financial assistance to aid member associations engaged in strike or lock-out, such as: supporting mediation or similar mechanisms for settling strikes, providing six-month interest-free loans to cover premiums for insured benefits, such as group life, disability and health, should they be disrupted by a strike or lock-out, extending six-month interest-free lines of credit to help with strike expenses, (e)

lobbying on behalf of (and at the request of) associations on strike or lock-out by writing letters and making phone calls to boards of governors, university presidents, administrators, and local politicians, and (f) sending visitors from member associations to demonstrate in support of a member association on strike.

From its modest beginning in 1978, the CAUT Defence Fund has grown to over 40 faculty associations, representing about 20,000 unionized academics from coast to coast. The fund's assets have grown from about \$1 million in the mid-1980s to over \$20 million today. In addition to the purposes described above, a very real consequence of the

fund has been to make the negotiating playing field more equal. No longer can faculty be bullied into accepting unjust and inappropriate settlements by threat of financial ruin. Indeed although many associations contact the fund during difficult negotiations to ensure payments will be available, seldom are these funds ever needed because a dedicated set of members with financial resources behind them most often leads to a satisfactory settlement negotiated between equal partners, as it did last year during negotiations with our Librarian and Archivist unit.

Albert Katz is UWOFA Trustee to the CAUT Defence Fund and Chair, Policy and Planning Committee, CAUT Defence Fund.

Negotiating goals for part-time faculty

By Mike Darwes

On May 26th, 1998, the Ontario Labour Board certified the UWOFA bargaining unit comprising both full- and part-time faculty at Western. This was a breakthrough for faculty associations in Canada, both in the size of the new bargaining unit (largest in Canada) and in its broad composition. The Labour Board recognized that full- and part-time faculty have interests more in

common than divergent, and that collective bargaining could be successful for all faculty together.

Twelve years and three collective agreements later, at the UWOFA general meeting of March 2nd, President Regna Darnell announced that negotiating goals for part-time faculty had received general membership approval; that is, approval in a ballot open to all members.

Membership consideration of other goals, not affecting just part-time faculty, will occur later.

How did it come about that the association had separated out the part-time goals, given our certificate's recognition of common interests? Our current collective agreement expires on June 30th, and our employer has proposed preliminary discussions on part-time faculty concerns. UWOFA

has agreed to participate in such discussions, because we see from experience in past negotiations that it can be difficult to give part-time concerns the extended consideration that is required.

Should the discussions actually occur, UWOFA representatives need to be informed with goals for part-time faculty that can be carried forward into the actual negotiations for the next collective agreement. The Committee for Contract Faculty met early and often to prepare recommendations; the Contract Committee had timely discussions; and the Board considered the resulting part-time goals ahead of the complete group of goals to come. All this required beyond the usual level of diligence, patience, and willingness to compromise, and all involved are to be congratulated for the outcome.

It's not my purpose here to list and review all the goals one by one. That has been done for the membership at the general meeting of January 27th, and of course the goals were listed again in the recent ballot. All the goals are about improving and protecting the terms and conditions of employment for members – that's the fundamental purpose of the union, after all – and the majority concentrate on familiar and overlapping themes:

job security, career path, seniority, compensation, and recognition as members of the academic community. This is no surprise. Essentially the same concerns featured in the negotiations for the first collective agreement over a decade ago, and have continued throughout in one form or another. Does this mean we're just bashing our collective head against an impenetrable wall?

Some goals take longer to achieve.

Our sequence of collective agreements should be regarded as a work in progress, evidence of continued striving and accomplishment.

Far from it. Our sequence of collective agreements should be regarded as a work in progress, evidence of continued striving and accomplishment. Some goals are by their nature long-term, perhaps requiring more than one cycle of negotiations. For an example outside our own university, I'd point to the amalgamation of bargaining units at Queen's – resulting in a bargaining unit that represents both full- and part-time faculty as ours

does. Over time, both incremental and transformative change can be achieved.

Setting goals for negotiation is not a tautologous task. The goals express the aspirations of members for improvements; they are at once a re-affirmation of our collective purpose and a vital part of UWOFA's communication between members, Board and negotiating team. UWOFA's process for setting goals is detailed and exhaustive: we consider records kept by our Professional Officers, Grievance Committee members, results of surveys and focus groups, experience from and provisions found at other universities, general recommendations and specific advice from national and provincial bodies, and advice from legal and other professional consultants. Our members have an opportunity to be involved at the beginning of each cycle, to vote on article goals before positions representing those goals are placed on the negotiating table, and to hear an accounting of how negotiations have advanced the goals before voting on a proposed collective agreement.

In solidarity, and with thanks to Marilyn Norman for helpful conversations on part-time goals,

Mike Dawes, Chief Negotiator.

'Twas two days before striking

By Linda Dunn and Marisa Surmacz

'Twas two days before striking, all Members were rushed,
Organizing and preparing, getting ready for the fuss.

The potties were ordered, the locations were set,
In hopes that our Members would be dry and not wet.

The signs were printed and waiting for their 'cedar' sticks,
While the Members were scheduled and slotted into duty picks.

Job security, equitable salaries and fair ARRAs
Were three main issues we stuck to, getting ready to spar.

Yes, we wanted more money, and we weren't being greedy,
Because for some of us, the strike pay was substantially more meaty.

The Employer was all nestled and determined not to bend,
While Librarians and Archivists scrambled to defend.

When all through the land there arose such a clatter,
Emails were being sent to CAUT, UWOFAs-LA ... and to all that mattered.

Expertise and wisdom made sure we didn't wither,
All provided by Regna, James, the Board, Peter Simpson and Kerry Pither.

The Employer hoped that we would be scared and cave,
But communication and strike prep soon saw us saved.

Thank you to Mike Dawes our 1st chief negotiator,
For laying the ground work and being a life saver.

With Mike Dawes as our chief, we started the race,
And when Aniko took over, she kept up the pace.

And to Jim Davies, the man who helped with the money,
We thank you from our hearts; you're such a sweet honey!

Hats off to the UWOFAs Administration,
Who was moving the office to a new location.

And lest we not forget, our colleague David Heap,
Who connected us with important friends who made the Employer leap.

UWOFAs-F Members pitched in with great zeal,
Working and supporting us to get the best deal.

Aniko and her wit, Linda and the crew,
Dug in with determination until the Employer withdrew.

Banding together and working as one,
By communicating and listening and of course having fun,

These are key to solidarity and crucial to winning,
But remember all must be in place right at the beginning.

Although we admit the previous statement is true,
It didn't hurt having the power to turn the campus blue.

Why blue and not purple? You might be thinking in your mind,
Because of a promise from the District Labour Council to find

LTC and CAW Members who would join us for the walk,
All in preparation in case the Employer wouldn't talk.

For future encounters, one strike vote under our belts,
We're hoping the differences between Employer and us melt.

We've done the strike planning and documented the process.
We are now the experts and are ready to focus.

There are 15 months before we come back to the table.
Let's hope that the Employer will be willing and able

To talk and discuss our issues and not fool.
We demand respect because Librarians and Archivists rule!

If UWOFAs-F is faced with despair,
UWOFAs-LA is more than willing to share.

With a twinkle in our eyes and with shouts of praise,
We wish our sisters and brothers a salary raise.

Before we close, there's one last word we would say,
Faculty Members, we hope the Employer sees it your way!

Adapted from 'Twas the Night Before Christmas by Clement Clarke Moore

Linda Dunn is Duty Chief Negotiator, UWOFAs-LA, and Marisa Surmacz is Strike Committee Chair, UWOFAs-LA.

Tolpuddle labour pioneers to be honoured

By David Heap

At the request of our President, it has been my pleasure to attend monthly meetings of the London and District Labour Council as an observer on behalf of UWOFA. Since we are not affiliated with the Canadian Labour Congress and the Ontario Federation of Labour, our union does not have voting rights at Labour Council, but attendance has concrete benefits for us nonetheless. When our Librarians and Archivists bargaining unit was facing a possible strike last fall, representatives of our Board spoke at Labour Council, and in the following days our intransigent employer received many messages from local unions, pressing for a fair and timely settlement. This is one example of how labour solidarity works, simply by sharing information about negotiations and supporting other unions in collective bargaining.

Regular meetings at Labour Council invariably include a significant amount of support for charities as well as reports from different unions and committees. One special project this year brings together Labour Council with the City of London and local artists to commemorate pioneers in the trade union movement who ended their days here in our community.

Friends of Tolpuddle

In the 1830s, six agricultural labourers from Tolpuddle (in Dorset, England) formed a Friendly Society of Agricultural Workers in order to protest the reduction of their already starvation wages. They were arrested and tried for ‘swearing an unlawful oath’ and sentenced to serve seven years in a penal colony in Australia. The British government was eager to make an example of them in order to discourage more union activity, but their harsh sentences sparked public outrage. There was great social unrest (including mass marches and petitions) in England over their convictions, and they were eventually pardoned. Only one of the six resettled in Tolpuddle. Among the others, George Loveless, John Standfield and James Brine immigrated to London, Ontario. They were ashamed to be seen as felons as they were “decent, god-fearing men.” George Loveless wrote: “We have injured no man’s reputation, character, person or property. We were uniting to preserve ourselves, our wives and children from utter degradation and starvation.”

This episode is seen as the beginning of trade unionism. Currently, there is a monument to the Tolpuddle Martyrs at the London Peace Gardens to recog-

nize this significant moment in labour history, and our local connection to the Tolpuddle Martyrs. The City of London has donated funds to enhance this monument, and a sycamore tree has been planted at the site. A group, Friends of Tolpuddle, along with the London Arts Council, will be selecting a structure that will honour these labour pioneers. However, more funds are needed in order to create a structure that gives this historic event the importance it deserves.

The Friends of Tolpuddle are calling on affiliates and other unions for support in this endeavour that has local, national and international significance. It would be fitting to erect a monument that recognizes the contributions of the past, the achievements of the present, and the direction for the future of the labour movement. For more information on how you can help Friends of Tolpuddle, visit the London and District Labour Council website: www.ldlc.on.ca

David Heap is a professor of French and linguistics.