

September, 2005

Thinking about the Next Negotiations: an Invitation to Participate.

As negotiations for our new contract begin to loom, the call goes out to all who wish to participate in the work of the Contract Committee, the group which develops the goals of our next bargaining proposals. In this Bargaining Bulletin you will discover how to find out about, and become involved in, this work. Please join us!

**A
C
T
S**

How we got here.

Seven years doesn't seem very long, but in terms of control over the conditions and compensation of our work as academics, things have changed in important and sometimes radical ways since 1998. Before that date our working lives were governed by a document known as the "Conditions of Appointment"; despite some opportunity for discussion of its provisions, ultimately these conditions, including salary settlements, benefits and so on, were imposed by the Board of Governors, who were under no obligation to pay much attention to our opinions about such matters.

The summer of 1997 had seen a long struggle to reach what became known as the "Comprehensive Agreement": a document designed to incorporate a diversity of concerns held by Western's faculty. Ultimately, the hopes of a fair and reasonable negotiated settlement were defeated by the dilatory style of the Administration, and late in that year the Association voted to begin a drive to certify UWOFA as the legal bargaining agent for Western's faculty. May of 1998 saw us become a certified faculty union. Before that time, individual faculty members were pretty much left to their own devices in any dealings with the various arms of the University's Administration; since then, our relationship is governed by Ontario Labour law through successive Collective Agreements, with these agreements designed to safeguard the rights of us all.

What have past contracts won for us?

It is well to reflect on some of the benefits that have accrued to us as a result of this change:

- legally-protected academic freedom
- controlled workload and working conditions
- standard procedures for promotion & tenure
- grievance & arbitration procedures
- real protections for contract faculty
- improvements in compensation and benefits
- clearly defined academic responsibilities
- non-discrimination & harassment measures

We shall be holding an information meeting to describe and discuss the work of the Contract Committee and the negotiation process, as well as to listen to your input as Members:

Time & date: 2:30-4:30 p.m., Thursday 29th September 2005

Location: UC 222

Thus, in the same way that union action over the decades in society at large brought the population such things as a minimum wage, old age pensions and on-the-job safety standards, our faculty union has won for Western's academic community many important practical benefits.

How did this happen?

The development and negotiation of our first contract took quite some time: the summer of 1998 saw the first Contract Committee (18 core members, plus many others from seven faculties) construct proposed contract language, working from pre-existing contracts at other Canadian universities, from advice provided by CAUT and OCUFA, and from suggestions provide by our own membership. These bargaining goals were discussed and eventually ratified by the membership, and then presented by our Negotiating Team as our proposals to the Administration. Negotiations overlapped with the presentation of proposals and we eventually ratified the contract (1998-2002) on 16 June 2000.

Development of the proposals for our second contract moved along a little more briskly: our surveys and focus group discussions began in the fall of 2001, and we had much ready to table with the Administration team by the spring of 2002. Negotiations, however, did not begin until July of that year: this time the Administration demanded our entire package before they would talk to us. Nonetheless, the pace eventually picked up, partly due to our Membership's having authorised UWOFA to call a strike if it should deem it appropriate to do so. We eventually ratified our second contract (2002-06) in April 2003. So our first contract took just over 2 years to develop and achieve; our second took about 1 ½ years.

What's next?

We have learned that timing is extremely important, both to the timely completion of the whole bargaining task and to maintaining the initiative and momentum during negotiations. Therefore, UWOFA has already begun working on the development of proposals for the third round of negotiations: we have compiled a comprehensive list of problems that experience has taught us still exist in the present Collective Agreement, and have begun to think of ways to address them. Our next step is to identify the volunteer Members who will help work up the goals and language of our new proposals. It is intended that the development of goals and contract language will be completed by the end of February 2006, so clearly we have much to do, and this Bulletin is a call to all who would like to make a contribution towards the completion of this task. **Members are welcome to contribute to specific contract items, or to contribute more generally, as they will.**

If you would like to join in the work of the Contract Committee, whether on specific issues or more generally, or would like further information, please contact any of the following:

Jane Toswell,
President, UWOFA.
mjtoswel@uwo.ca

Aniko Varpalotai,
Co-chair, UWOFA
Contract Committee.
aniko@uwo.ca

Paul Handford,
Co-chair, UWOFA
Contract Committee.
handford@uwo.ca