

CUPE raises questions

Dear Graduate Students,

As you may or may not be aware, a motion was passed at the last GSA meeting to authorize the Negotiations Committee (GSANC) (which presently negotiates with the university on behalf of Graduate Assistants for pay scales, and terms and conditions of employment) to "pursue" the option of joining a union. It is my understanding that the Negotiations Committee is acting under the belief that most GAs want to become affiliated with a large union, and is treating the matter as if it is the only option.

Before the GSA rushes into unionization with the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) there are some difficult questions that must be answered:

1. If credibility as a negotiating body is a problem, why has the step not been taken of certifying the GSA with the Public Service Employees Relations Board, thus giving the GSA the same bargaining rights and grievance procedures as CUPE.

2. Do we wish to become part of a 350,000 member organization, of which we would comprise less than one third of one percent of the membership? (There are 1322 graduate assistants.)

3. Would you be prepared to go on strike in support of actions of other union locals?

4. It is an offense under the CUPE constitution to cross members' picket lines, and to advocate leaving the union. Would you accept the penalties administered

by the union should you judge such actions to be necessary?

5. Would you be prepared to pay the union dues of approximately \$6.10 per month (about \$73 per year)?

6. Assuming only GAs paid dues, that would mean a payment of about \$97,000. If we are prepared to spend such quantities of money, would it not be wiser to hire one or two full time staff to negotiate and lobby on our behalf, and in doing so, remain in complete control of our own affairs?

7. Since a large problem with the issue of payment of graduate assistants stems from funding problems in general, why hasn't the support of department chairmen been enlisted? Presently, the GSANC dutifully negotiates higher pay scales, yet the departments receive the same amount of money for graduate assistantships.

8. Only about 34% of graduate students are GAs. What would be the role of the GSA in an affiliation with CUPE? If the GSA were to become affiliated with CUPE, would the other 66% of the membership approve of such a relationship? If it were to remain entirely independent, then it is hardly the role of the present GSA Council to promote to its members an affiliation with an independent third party instead of remaining with the GSA.

9. Have the GSA constitutional ramifications of affiliation with a union been examined? For example, Article VII of the constitution and Bylaw 10, which deal with the Negotiations Committee, would have to be changed.

In conclusion, it is my belief that the actions of joining a union have been proceeding too quickly, and under too much secrecy, without a rational, step-by-step approach to solving the problems we face as GAs. All graduate assistants must become aware of the facts, ask questions and make their opinions known so that the actions taken by the GSA represent the opinion of the GAs in general, not just a few with a specific agenda. The best way to make your views known is to make sure that your department has a representative who will vote for your views at the next GSA meeting. All graduate students may attend the meetings.

Next GSA meeting: February 13, 1989 @ 6:00 p.m. in the Back Room of the Power Plant.

General Meeting and Executive Elections: March 20, 1989.

Ian Williamson
M.Sc. Student

Senate Reform worth the effort

Re: Triple E Senate no benefit to Albertans (Feb. 3)

Mr. Levenson's article condemning the principles of Senate Reform demonstrates a failure to understand both the reasons why so many Canadians support a change in the Upper House and why Triple-E reforms are necessary.

He argues that the petition that is currently being circulated on campus is simply a means by which Alberta's Progressive Conservative government may avoid

campaigning on "real" issues or the record of their administration. Mr. Levenson fails to recognize that Senate Reform is supported by members and leaders of other political parties (including Liberal leader Laurence Decore) and that support for the campus petition is not limited to any single political party in theory or in actual fact. Perhaps Alberta's Progressive Conservative government will use Senate Reform as a platform upon which to run its election campaign, but in doing so it will face the responsibility (if re-elected) to carry out its promise to fight for Triple E.

Mr. Levenson seems to believe that because Alberta currently enjoys strong representation in the federal Cabinet and its needs are now being addressed, we should be content with the system as it stands and should not try to change it. Is it not obvious, however, that detrimental programs like the NEP and FIRA arose during a period when Alberta

lacked an effective mechanism to influence decisions made in Ottawa? Is it not entirely possible that such a situation could easily recur — to the detriment of Alberta or any other province or region in Canada?

The truth of the matter is that despite the speeches, petitions and widespread public opinion in favor of Senate Reform, realistically the goal of a Triple-E Senate remains years ahead at best. However, arguing that the end desired should not be sought because of the difficulty of the means is foolish. The barriers to Senate Reform are by no means insurmountable in our democratic society.

Let's face it, the only two things that are dead and stinking about Senate Reform are the thought of continuing the existing scenario without reform, and people who argue that things are better this way.

Darcy Tkachuk
Arts IV

SU to revise prof contracts

by Lee Craig

In an attempt to make university teaching more equally balanced with research, the General Faculties Council will be receiving a motion from the Students' Union, proposing an amendment to the Faculty Agreement Contract.

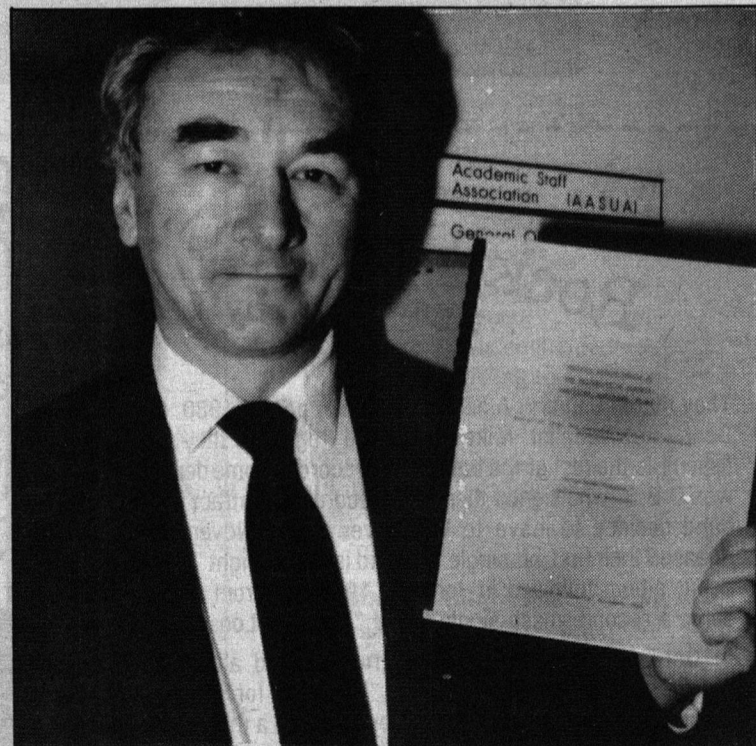
The agreement lists what will be reviewed about a professor's performance regarding salary and and tenure. No other point has been given more prominence except where teaching is said to be of "major importance".

However, vp academic Charles Vethan feels that this is "too ambiguous". Vethan cannot release the wording of the motion because once it is publicly released, it might die in a "muddle of bureaucracy". The motion would not make teaching more important than research, but equal.

Vethan said there is "strong support by the academic community and students at the U of A" for this motion. He and the SU have met with the Association of the Academic Staff at the University of Alberta (AASUA) to discuss their proposal.

The chairman, Dr. John Bertie, has declared the motion a good idea. But he and the AASUA have found the SU's proposal on mandatory teaching workshops to be ineffective and hard to implement, preferring older methods, such as peer consultation.

"Anybody (the vast majority) takes teaching very seriously... fundamentally it is a reasonably



Colin Northcott

Dr. Bertie, chairman of the AASUA, holds up a copy of the teaching effectiveness report. He feels most profs take teaching very seriously.

good system," Bertie said.

Academic commissioner Michelle Kitt admits "it is illegal what we're doing", referring to the procedure the SU is using. They are going straight to the GFC, the committee which has the final word on matters of policy. By doing so, they are bypassing several subcommittees which would normally see the motion first. If the GFC endorses the motion, the subcommittees cannot block it.

"Perhaps we are now too friendly with the administration...

the students are our constituents, we serve them... maybe we should be more radical," Kitt said, "It would be great to go and protest like the 60's and early 70's — to make a change and get things done."

With professor evaluations presently overseen by individual faculties, the effect, if the motion does go through, is uncertain. It might take several years to implement. Vethan, Kitt, and the rest of the SU at least hope the seed has been sown for future SU representatives.

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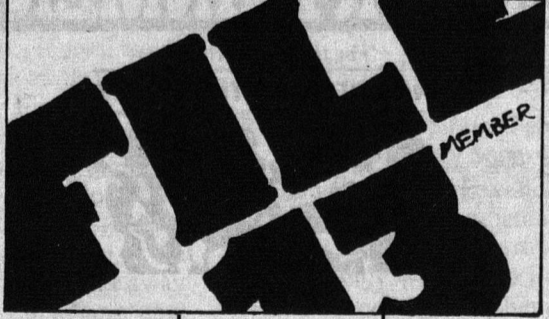
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