

BOG Rep Report

Faculty underpaid

Peter Brickwood

I wish that I had something more cheerful than yet another prospect of a strike to report but here it is negotiation time and the administration is yet again putting us through needless anxiety. You may think I'm singing the same old tune but the conciliation sessions between the administration and YUFA were terminated by the conciliator. Any of you who are familiar with labour relations will know how rare it is that a conciliator selected by the Ministry of Labour will end the attempts to reach a settlement. Usually it is one of the two sides who withdraw but in this case it appears that the administration bargaining team did not have sufficient direction from their principals (the Board of Governors) in order to negotiate. I can attest to the fact that the Board has never discussed the issue in sufficient detail to give any direction to the administration bargaining team.

Money is the Issue

Even I, who is a staunch supporter of unions as any student on this campus, had some initial difficulty with supporting "rich" professors in their bid to get more money. But I was quickly convinced when I did a little salary comparison. It is quite incredible to me that Firemen and Policemen should be making not just more

but far more than many University professors. For those jobs you need only a grade 12 education yet a First Class Constable earns in the neighbourhood of \$27,000 per year.

The base rate or starting salary for a person in the professorial stream at York is \$15,790. This usually requires a full Ph.D. which is another 8 to 10 years of study on top of a Bachelors degree. I know of at least two jobs which I could get next month that would pay me the same amount and another one that would pay about one-third more with just my B.A.

How the University administration expects to attract and keep the best researchers and teachers for that kind of money, I have no idea. In York's case we cannot use our world class reputation as University of Toronto can and we certainly cannot claim to attract people because of our superlative research facilities when we are constantly scrambling to find enough money for the library and updating computer facilities. As much as we joke about the University being "God's own windtunnel" and our location in "beautiful Downsview", it is not as if York had some mystical beauty that will attract crowds of prospective professors eager to sample the wonders of this delightful setting.

People

A University's strength must be in its people. Renowned scholars and the best teachers will keep our academic quality high and our research amongst the best (provided it has adequate support) but who is going to come to York or stay here when the salaries at other Universities are becoming steadily better than those at York.

York's salaries for professors are in the order of \$2,000 per year less than the Ontario average and as we all know Ontario's funding of Universities is amongst the poorest in Canada. Stating it another way, in the last five years York's salaries for academics has dropped about 17 per cent behind inflation.

If this trend is not reversed there will come a time when sheer economic necessity will outweigh loyalty to York for the best of our professors who receive offers from other Universities. There will also come a time, if it is not here already when the monetary benefits will be so inequitable that the best researchers and scholars will not wish to come to York.

If that happens then York's reputation is bound to suffer a decline. Most graduate students are accepted at more than one University and choose on the basis of the scholars they will have an opportunity to work with but those scholars will not be at York. Undergraduate applicants are

usually accepted at several universities and how will York attract those who want high quality education if we allow the quality of our faculty to be eroded. If our enrolment drops then the Government funding which is based on enrolment will drop and will be in a downward spiral which might well be irreversible.

Convocating

I want to finish my last two courses and convocate this spring. I am sure that every student reading this column would like to complete their year without anxiety about disrupted exam schedules, unmarked work or marks not turned in.

The administration must move to avert the possibility of a strike. They can request that conciliation be resumed at any times and they can make a fair offer. We students should encourage them to do so with every means that is available to us.

Goodbye

There are so many things unsaid and undone but my time is up so I will simply say, goodbye.

Peter Brickwood

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