

Faculty responds to anti-union editorial

The letter you could not find in The Globe

In the continuing controversy over faculty unionization, the *Globe and Mail* on its editorial page, has been a consistent and outspoken critic of the growing organization of post-secondary faculty. It singled out the York University Faculty Association (YUFA) in two negative editorials last December.

To present their side of the case, YUFA delegated the association's vice-chairperson, Virginia Hunter, to reply in a letter to the editor of the *Globe*.

If you saw that letter, then you are only getting half the story. One-third to be precise. Two-thirds of the letter was, shall we say, "edited" out.

A spokesperson for the *Globe* said the letter was cut because it was hard to understand and whatever the letter was trying to say was contained in the first paragraph.

As a service to our readers, we are printing below the original version of Hunter's letter. The sections in bold are those deleted by the *Globe*.

• • •
I write to you as one of those

responsible for that fascinating Collective Agreement at York University. I mean, who could be more responsible than the Co-Chairperson of the Collective Bargaining Committee (i.e. chief organizer), Co-Ordinator of the Collective Agreement, and finally a member of the Negotiating Committee. First, let me admit quite frankly that it has been two years of damned hard work — a thankless task. Over and over I have wondered silently and even asked aloud what reward would in the end be mine. When would my colleagues qua brothers and sisters send me some flower or perhaps buy me a bottle of Scotch? When indeed! After all, what they see in that fascinating document is only the codification of working conditions they have had for years, academic freedom, tenure, participation in University governance, sabbaticals . . .

Come on now, you clever rogue, did you not know we professors have sabbaticals every seven years? Take myself, now. I'm on sabbatical leave and busy writing a book so that I can some day face



the rigorous evaluation of my peers for promotion to full Professor. I ask you, seriously, how could I do that over the Christmas holidays with papers to mark or even in the summer with new courses to prepare or articles-reviews to write? But surely you knew all this. Even in the last month an article appeared in your very own paper about the growing interest of industrial unions in sabbaticals for workers. I wonder where they got the idea. You knew, you knew. To repeat, it has been a thankless task. No one

has even been appreciative of maternity leave at full pay or adoption leave, probably for obvious reasons: in practice we had this anyway. I can only hope these benefits may serve as an example to other unions to seek the same.

In sum, I was beginning to believe my reward would be "in Heaven", as they say. And then your splendid editorial(s). Not one but two in succession. Thank you. Did even the despised postal workers or the irresponsible high school teachers merit such attention? And yet I remember well when they were the subject of your "concern". And well you might have been concerned, for the difference unionization made to the postal workers and teachers in wages, working conditions, and militancy was truly astounding. Now, we all know from those editorials of former times the attitude of the *Globe and Mail* to workers in the public sector, particularly teachers, and among them university teachers. A fortiori, how much more frantic you must be about unionized university teachers,

even if our salaries have not undergone stunning improvement. The reason that I say thank you then is that you make it more than clear that any "hopes" you entertain about the future of the Universities may not be so easily realized. Think, for instance, of the details you so cunningly selected for your exposé: tenure, University governance, sabbatical leaves, and even traditional hours of work. (What, by the way, is the three-term year?) You reveal to me and to all who can put two and two together that this is just what the *Globe and Mail* editor(s) and behind him-her-them Blundering Bill (and his minions of Doctors' Hospital, Gray Coach, and Provincial Parks "fame") want to get rid of, the traditional practices and working conditions of the Universities. It won't be so easy now, will it? In any case, some of us knew this long ago. Hence the union. Hence, for the most part, the status quo. Hence the thanklessness. But thank you for my reward at last.

And may I suggest a reward for you — a sabbatical, a time of contemplation and some hard work as well, so that you may some day return to your readership full of the new knowledge, new methodologies, and new ideas which we, as teachers, bring to our students after a year's sabbatical leave. Now we won't expect a book of you, but perhaps a little intellectual honesty — for the first time.

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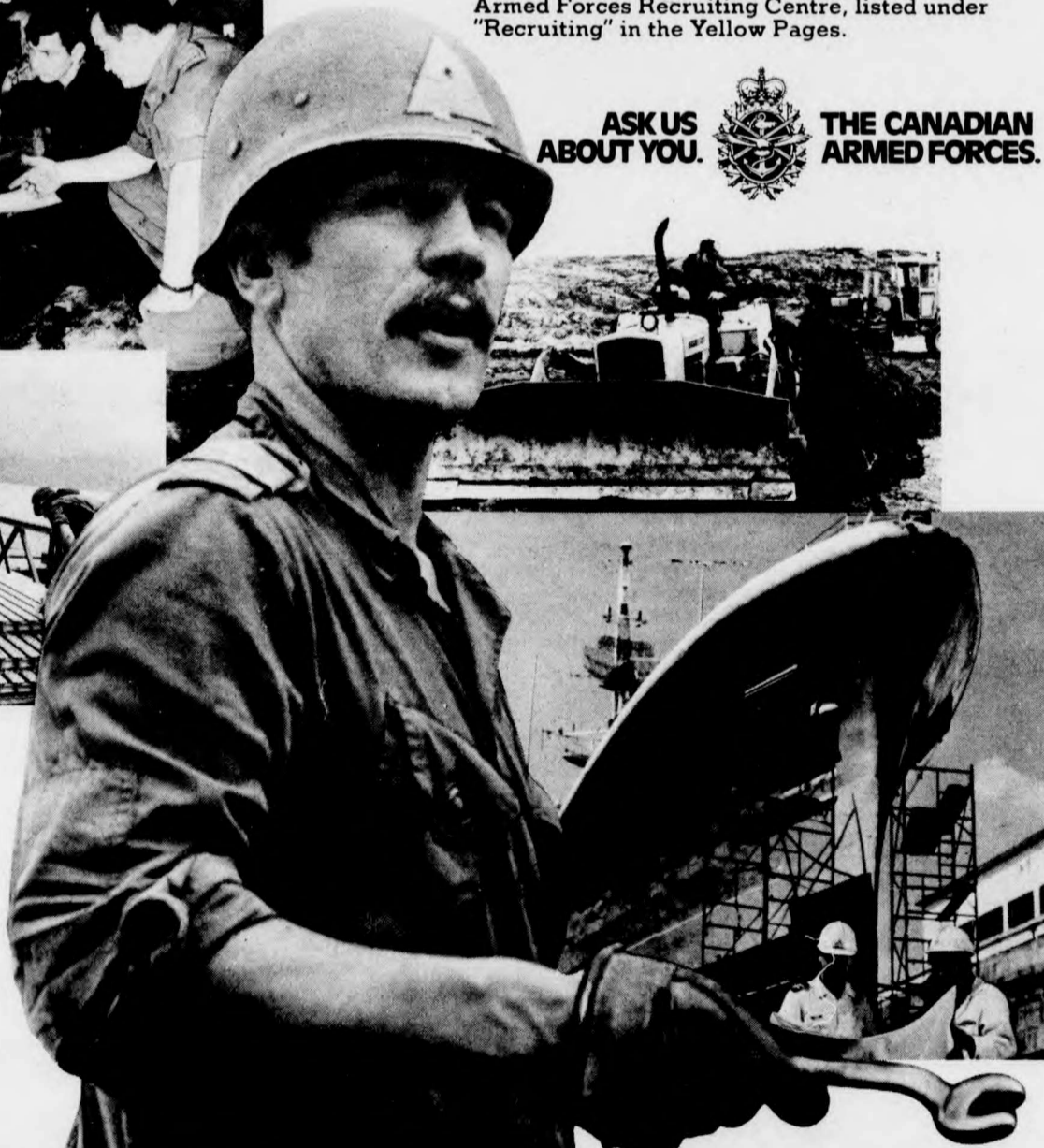
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