

UNB faculty to unionize? We could know by Xmas

By GERRY LASKEY

Three faculty unions on this campus are currently going through a process of requesting certification for collective bargaining rights with UNB before the New Brunswick Industrial Relations Board (or Labor Relations Board). They are the Association of UNB Teachers (AUNBT), the UNB Engineering and Forestry Faculty Association (EFFA) and the UNB Law Faculty Association (LFA). The certification hearings of the Labor Relations Board began last spring and the final sessions were held in Fredericton the 18th-22nd and 25th of September.

The final written arguments of counsel representing the three unions and the university administration are due to the Labor Relations Board 25th of October. After the final briefs are circulated to the four parties involved written rebuttals will be submitted by 10th of November. The board then begins the actual decision making and a decision may be forthcoming by the end of 1978.

Governors in spring 1977 seeking voluntary recognition as a collective bargaining unit for UNB and failed in this attempt. As a result the union started their certification campaign in October 1977.

A spokesperson for AUNBT, Gary Chaison of the school of administration, who is an AUNBT executive member and chairperson of the collective bargaining committee of the AUNBT executive, said that the reasons faculty have joined AUNBT and are seeking certification reflect various concerns. Chaison said some are concerned that UNB salaries relative to other Canadian higher education facilities have deteriorated making it difficult to maintain and recruit good faculty. Some, he said, felt they had no say in the security of their positions. There was some concern that the terms and conditions of employment under which UNB faculty currently work may not be legally binding, he said.

Chaison said one issue that was of large concern to faculty was a

Chaison said that no faculty on campus is really "unique", and that differences such as demand for services in and out of the university were varied in all faculties. He emphasized that AUNBT membership is open to all faculty without discrimination and said he felt that minority concerns could be very effectively pressed by AUNBT as well as general concerns of all faculty. The CAUT and AUNBT have been active in pressing the concerns of all UNB faculty for years, said Chaison.

"A lot of people look at it as there's so much (money etc.), and that what the faculty gets, the students won't. That's not true," Chaison said. He added, "Achieving our objectives does not conflict with the student's objectives, and in many cases they coincide." He suggested concerns over library cut-backs and the quality of education as mutual interests of students and faculty.

Chaison was optimistic about AUNBT's progress in the certification process. "I think we did very well in the sign up campaign and I think we did very well in presenting our case," he said.

When asked what his reaction would be if the Labor Relations Board decided to certify all three unions Chaison said, "I've never really given it much thought."

The EFFA (Engineering and Forestry Faculty Association) was constituted in November of 1977. According to EFFA secretary, J.E. Lewis, the union presently represents about 80 per cent of the approximately 100 potential membership of the forestry and engineering faculties. He said that of the remaining 20 per cent about 10 per cent do not wish to join the EFFA and about 10 per cent are on sabbatical or other leave of absence. The EFFA membership specifically excludes deans, associate deans and the director of the computer science school but does include department chairpersons.

The president of EFFA, John McLaughlin of Surveying Engineering, said that the idea of a faculty union was not initiated by his association but was a response of the concern felt by its membership over the possibility of the engineering and forestry faculties being represented along with all faculty by the AUNBT. He said that there was concern that such an eventuality would "submerge" the particular concerns of those faculties. McLaughlin said, "the faculty has not been happy with the administration for some time on matters of interest to us." He added that although the impetus towards unionization has come about with some reluctance and as a response to a specific concern (i.e. the possibility of representation of its members by AUNBT) the faculty have spent a long time working through traditional routes "and they haven't worked." He also said that certification of the EFFA was now "absolutely essential".

McLaughlin said that the identity of forestry and engineering faculty as a distinct campus community arises out of the facts that both are applied sciences and that the practice of each profession is governed by the various provincial professional associations (eg. Association of Professional Engineers of New



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Brunswick and the Association of New Brunswick Foresters). He said that engineering programmes must be accredited by the Canadian Accreditation Board of the Canadian Council of Professional Engineers for students to be accepted as professional engineers. Similar regulation governs forestry students.

The fact that forestry and engineering are applied sciences with a great emphasis on current technological innovations makes these faculties unique, said McLaughlin.

He said that in these professions industrial experience is of equal importance to academic qualification. Although salaries of long time engineers are comparable in both fields, McLaughlin said, starting salaries for young engineers are lower in teaching than in industry, therefore acting as a disincentive in attracting young and innovative professionals to the university and threatening the up-to-date status of the faculty.

One issue which is of particular concern to the EFFA is that of professional consultation in the industrial field. McLaughlin said that faculty make very little money in consultation but that it is "the only way you can keep up to date on what's going on in industry." He added that although "some people in the academic community say that's 'dirty

money', we need that (currency) to maintain our accreditation."

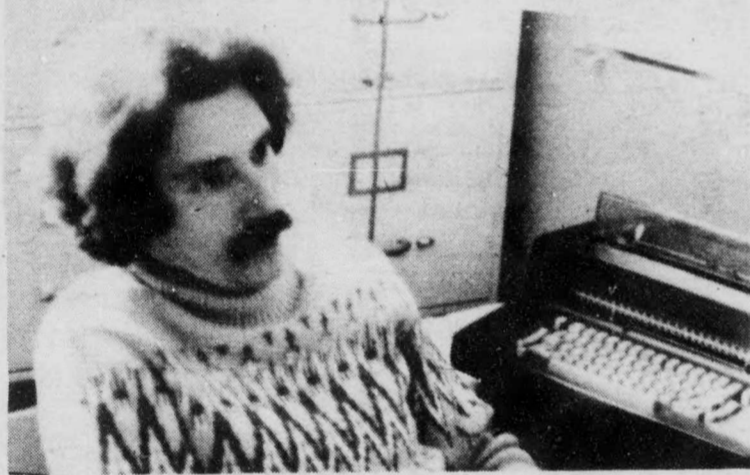
McLaughlin was optimistic about the progress EFFA was making in the certification process and said, "I was very proud of our effort. Our rather small association spent a lot of time and money putting this together." He also mentioned he was happy that there has been no animosity developed between the various parties involved.

When asked his reaction if AUNBT won certification as the sole UNB faculty union McLaughlin said, "In the unlikely event that that was to happen, then the engineers and foresters would have to take a very active role (in AUNBT)." He said he foresaw difficulties in such a scenario, though perhaps not insurmountable ones. McLaughlin also said, "I think we could develop a good working relationship," if both EFFA and AUNBT were certified.

The LFA (Law Faculty Association) was formed October 1974 chiefly in response to the possibility of the law faculty being brought into a union (AUNBT). The LFA now represents the 13 full time teachers of law at UNB, except the dean who is excluded as management due to the interpretation of the Industrial Relations Act.

"The law faculty doesn't really want a union at all," said law professor Dan Hurley, president of

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AUNBT spokesperson Gary Chaison: "The AUNBT is a democratic organization that can effectively represent diverse people with a diversity of interests."

photo by kilfoil

The chief issue in the certification process is what would be an appropriate collective bargaining unit(s) for UNB faculty. Whether or not faculty can be unionized in New Brunswick seems to have been decided since faculty at Saint Thomas University and l'Université de Moncton are already unionized. In the hearings the AUNBT has been arguing that an all faculty bargaining unit is the appropriate form, while the EFFA and LFA have argued that their membership have a "community of interest" quite distinct from the rest of the campus. The university administration has opposed faculty unionization in general and several unions in particular.

The AUNBT (Association of UNB Teachers) is the oldest of the three faculty associations. It was established in 1956 and is a local branch of CAUT (Canadian Association of University Teachers), a federation of faculty unions widely active across Canada. According to a union spokesperson the AUNBT now represents about 400 of a possible 570 membership on the Fredericton and Saint John campuses. AUNBT membership is open to all faculty, librarians and instructors, excluding all persons at and above the level of dean. The AUNBT changed its constitution in March 1977 to become a full fledged trade union opting for collective bargaining. AUNBT approached the Board of

feeling that decision making in the university had lost its old balance and was becoming the unilateral prerogative of the administration. He said there was desire to have joint faculty/administration participation in decision making at UNB and "to make the university administration accountable for their decisions." Chaison said there was faculty concern "to focus in on what the university's all about, and that's teaching," as opposed to secondary things.

Chaison also said that the trend to faculty unionization is not new and is strong all over Canada. He said that about 60 per cent of all Canadian faculty have collective bargaining. Chaison pointed out faculty unionization at STU and U de M as well as its discussion at Mt. Allison as examples close to home.

Chaison said he felt that one faculty union was appropriate for UNB. "The AUNBT is a democratic organization that can effectively represent diverse people with a diversity of interests," he said. He pointed out that lawyers and engineers had been active in AUNBT for a number of years and that there was an engineer presently on the 14 member executive. He said that the AUNBT model was the "traditional pattern throughout Canada" of faculty unionization and that lawyers at both Dalhousie University and U de M were members of CAUT.



UNB president, Doctor John Anderson recently revealed that he does not intend to seek re-election when his term ends June 30, 1979. Dr. Anderson was not available for comment by press time but further information will be forthcoming next week.