

# Part-time

# exploited

by Ron Charles  
reprinted from the Link  
Canadian University Press

Susan Murray has taught English as a second language at Concordia University in Montreal for eight years. She is one of the lowest paid teachers at the school. Murray often has to meet with her students in the cafeteria or hallway because the two-desk office she shares with 14 other professors is always in use. If she gets sick and can't teach she has to pay a replacement out of her own pocket. If Murray leaves the school at 65 all she will receive is her four per cent vacation pay and a pink slip. She has no job security.

She wants people to know that being a professor is not all tenure, tweed and BMWs. She wants people to know that some part-time professors at Concordia — women for the most part — are working under conditions that should have gone out with the one-room schoolhouse.

More than half the professors at Concordia teach on a part-time basis.

"We're the Soweto of Concordia," she said. "They ship us in to do the university's dirty work and then they ship us out again. Students don't know that there are two classes of teachers at Concordia. There's the first class and then there's us. We're the untouchables of Concordia."

The university contends that teaching at Concordia is not supposed to be the sole means of income for part-timers. Since the university offers no benefits, part-time professors are expected to work full-time elsewhere.

In fact many professors do. Many part-timers in Commerce and Engineering, for example, have jobs in industry.

Murray, who has had to take on teaching assignments at other institutions, said that if she had a full-time job somewhere else, she would not be able to commit enough time to her teaching at Concordia.

"There are part-time teachers who only teach one night or two days a week but in our department we have to teach three nights a week," she said.

The university's language sectors have the highest number of female part-timers. In 1983, Division I — which encompassed all the language programs — had 134 part-time female professors and 81 part-time male profs.

In 1983 there were 743 part-time professors at Concordia, 311 of them were female. At the same time there were 705 full-time professors and only 114 of them were female.

**"You live in holy terror that you are going to get sick. I'll suppose the alternative would be welfare."**

"It's cruel...it's unfair...it's unjust...it's exploitative," said Murray. "It is actually discriminatory."

She said the language sectors have the highest workloads because the professors have to coordinate with lab monitors and technicians. ESL teachers are also the lowest paid part-timers.

The Concordia Committee on the status of women recommended in its 1983 report that the university improve the situation of its part-time female employees (by improving the lot of part-timers in general).

"The undervaluing of women's work generally, together with the predominance of women among part-time workers, no doubt contributes to, or at least reinforces, the low wages paid for part-time work," states a brief by the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women which the university's committee used in its report.

The brief goes on to say that "part-time jobs are invariably poor jobs. The predominance of women among part-time workers in fact reflects the lack of choice many women have in the labour market. That part-time workers are not as well protected from exploitation as full-time workers further perpetuates the cycle of women's labour market disadvantage."

Murray contends that nothing has been done to improve the working conditions of those part-time professors who have little other means of income.

**"Everyone knows that there are problems and everyone agrees on what the major problems are, but nobody does anything. There is no body of part-timers with whom the administration can communicate."**

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Concordia's current Vice-Rector Academic, Francis Whyte, said he thinks the university should consider the problem of varied salary scales among part-timers.

"We should look at the possibility of setting up criteria," he said. He said that many differences in pay between departments are due to differences in departmental histories.

Ritva Seppanen, a part-time English professor, remembers the unionization bid with remorse.

"The problems that were problems then are problems still," she said. "It's preposterous. The most recent figures say that the number of part-time jobs created by the Mulroney government exceeds the number of full-time jobs created."

"It's a problem [part-time workers' lack of benefits] and someone is going to have to address it...things like paid leave. You live in holy terror that you are going to get sick," she said. "I'll suppose the alternative would be welfare."

Seppanen thinks the university should consider recommendations made by the Canadian Association of University Teachers regarding part-time professors who have no other means of income.

In its 1979 handbook, CAUT recommends that "As a minimum of part-time staff...should have a reasonable rate of pay per course basis, pro-rated fringe benefits where this is legally possible [allowing those with their major employment elsewhere to opt out], academic freedom and freedom from discrimination, the right to be present or to be represented at departmental meetings, and should be eligible for tenure. Tenure in part-time appointments should be possible after seven years as a part-time academic staff member or after a longer period of discontinuous service provided the last three years are continuous. Tenure should be granted through the same mechanisms and on the same criteria as for full-time academic staff."

"The question is," said Seppanen, "how the administration organizes its list of priorities. We're just not there."

Whyte said that while the plight of part-timers is important it can't be a university priority now.

"There are lots of priorities. There are lots of things that seem very important, part-timers is one of them," he said. "This year at this time, there are other priorities more pressing than that one."

"Everyone knows that there are problems and everyone agrees on what the major problems are," said Seppanen, "but nobody does anything. There is no body of part-timers with whom the administration can communicate."

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