

ON STREAM LITE #2
January 2004

UPDATES

Marilyn's budget message: I attended the first of the College President's "Staff Meetings" on next year's budget in Nelson. We were presented with what seemed a worst case scenario. About half of the projected shortfall is the reduction in college grants announced in last year's budget letter from the Ministry. However, next year is the election year, so my expectation is that this reduction will be waived by the Liberals—however, that's just my own optimistic hunch.

Marilyn indicated that the Board would make financial decisions on January 27. It will make a separate decision about tuition fees in early February.

Local bargaining may be truly a thing of the past since the power to ratify our collective agreement has been transferred from our Board to the Post-Secondary Employers' Association (PSEA) which is under the authority of the Public Sector Employers' Council (PSEC).

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Welcome back and Happy New Year!

LOCAL NEWS

Our Vice-President, Neil Stubbs, has opted to spend another semester in Victoria pursuing his doctoral studies, and Linda King does not wish to continue on in his stead this semester because of heavy workload commitments. So we have a vacant VP position available for a member who might want to "test the waters" for a couple of months.

On the labour relations front, things have been pretty quiet, perhaps the calm before the storm, if the budget numbers from Victoria aren't good.

The Executive is meeting with our five School Chairs on January 27 to discuss how the new model and roles are working and to offer any support we can to these brave souls in their difficult positions. We will follow this with a meeting with the Coordinators and the remaining non-instructional Department Heads to find out how things are working out for them.

The Executive has been developing policy, as directed by the membership, on honoraria, donations, and significant expenditures. We expect to present these at the next General Meeting.

GENERAL MEETING

We will hold the next membership meeting on **Thursday, February 12 from 5-7 pm**. Sandwiches will be provided as usual. The agenda will include an update by SWCC Chair Bev Onischak on the progress of negotiations. (We will have just returned from a second C-IEA Bargaining Conference by then.) Any ramifications from the latest budget crisis will be discussed. We will also be presenting our SCFA Restructuring proposal (described below) for approval in principle at this meeting.

C-IEA NEWS

All the major C-IEA committees (Presidents' Council, Bargaining Coordination and Review, Contract Administration) meet in January, leading up to the one day Bargaining Conference (attended by the local President, Bargainer, and Chief Steward) on February 7. Melanie Macdonald representing the C-IEA Standing Committee for Non-Regular Faculty will also attend this conference along with Bev, Monica and me.

C-IEA's annual Joint Conference of its other committees will be held on February 21 in Vancouver. Anyone not funded by C-IEA who would like to attend this conference may be eligible for SCFA funding. Let us know of your interest.

SCFA RESTRUCTURING PROPOSAL

The Executive has been considering how to handle two internal concerns: to provide more effective relief for the Chief Steward (Advocate) and to ensure an orderly succession of younger/newer members into Executive positions including that of the President.

While we have temporarily dealt with the first issue by purchasing more release time for the Advocate, we believe that establishing a steward system as exists in most other faculty unions is the better way to go in the long term. We also would like to have a released officer who could assist the Chief Steward in her duties and perhaps "apprentice" in this role.

The steward system and the released officer are also our proposed solution to the succession problem. Five or six School Stewards representing the SCFA Schools and other divisions with significant SCFA members would be an effective way to recruit new members into active union service. The released officer would not only assist the Chief Steward, but the President and Chief Bargainer as well, thereby gaining experience in all three areas. We would hope that this person would seek office in one of these positions the next time round.

The catch is the release time purchase. Our current SCFA budget cannot sustain a further regular expenditure on this scale without drawing down our reserves or

increasing dues. We will give you the opportunity to suggest that we do one or the other, but the plan we will initially present will require no additional cost. We will propose reducing the President's release from 50% to 25% to provide a 25% release for the new position.

We're not sure what to call the new position ("Vice President" is the default term at the moment). You may also have gathered that we would from now on call a spade a spade, and re-name the Advocate as Chief Steward and the SWCC Chair as Chief Bargainer or Negotiator..

The Executive under this model would be downsized a little with eight members: President, "Vice President", Chief Bargainer, Chief Steward, Secretary, Treasurer, Board Observer, and Retirement Issues Representative—no more members-at-large.

The Chief Steward would be responsible for setting up and reporting on the Stewards Committee. The Chief Bargainer would have a similar role with the bargaining team in negotiation years. The new, released "Vice-President" would oversee the group of SCFA committee chairs (and/or C-IEA committee representatives) who would be encouraged to meet periodically.

We believe these changes would increase the involvement of our newer, younger members in our union and make it a more effective labour relations and professional organization.

We look forward to your input on February 12 (or sooner, if you'd like).

Jim Howard

**FROM THE SWCC CHAIR
BARGAINING BULLETIN #1**

Thank you to all who returned bargaining surveys last fall. We were able to get some useful information. It was not surprising to learn that workload issues were seen to be top priority by most of the respondents.

One respondent commented, "The College is facing tough times – work with Admin., don't add to the problem" She/he then proceeded to rank only two menu options. However, these were the two most expensive items on the whole menu! Certainly, the SCFA membership will need to sort out what is really achievable in this round of negotiations.

The above comments are useful in helping me clarify my philosophy about the bargaining process. It is simple and two-fold. Bargaining is a process that involves two parties working together to achieve a mutually satisfying end. So, I am prepared to work with the College to get a collective agreement that will help give our members a satisfying working environment. As you may be aware we can use several tools in this work. The second belief that I have is that our members need to have input and be kept informed of our progress or lack of it.

Our small committee has is just being formed and we are arranging a meeting for next week. We are also arranging for a CIEA staff rep to come here to do a bargaining workshop. If you would like to join us, please contact me at BargainingSCFA@selkirk.ca

As part of our preparations, I will be attending two CIEA meetings, the regular Bargaining Coordination and Review Committee meeting and a Bargaining Conference. Jim Howard and Monica Vogler will also be attending Bargaining Conference. A report will be available after the conference.

In Solidarity,
Bev Onischak

The Advocate's Anecdotes or, "Hi" from Monica

Greetings SCFA Members. Just thought I'd catch up with you and give you a review of what's been happening in my office thus far this academic year.

The most distressing activity I was involved in was a partial layoff. Unfortunately the College neglected to discuss the workload issues with the discipline members prior to initiating the layoff process. Therefore they made several serious errors in their calculations and the process was far more stressful and protracted than it needed to be. The SCFA was integral in identifying the errors and ensuring the corrections were made: as a result, the layoff proportion was significantly reduced! Which leads me to my next point:

Workload questions are some of the most popular [Article 8]. The College will continue to seek to maximize members' workloads in an attempt to minimize salary payroll and deal with budget issues. The only way you can be sure that the work you are being assigned is being correctly compensated is to understand how your personal workload is calculated. I encourage each of you to take the time to learn this critical piece of information. [There will be a test!]

A related concept for term employees especially is how much preparation time they are due [Article 4.4]. The SCFA and the College have been disagreeing on the interpretation of this language for at least 4 months now! Nonetheless, we have not given up and expect a resolution in the next month. Patience, perseverance, or just plain stubbornness on our part; it's hard to tell! I just know we're right

The new "Student Evaluation of Instruction" form has been used for the first time last semester: a loooooong time in the coming. Thanks to the many members who contributed to its development. This semester the SCFA-College Committee that regulates forms and process [Article 7.6] will review the experience. If you have any feedback, I'd be happy to pass it on for you.

Finally, a grievance has been launched fighting the College's unilateral reduction of English courses from 4 to 3 hours credit. This policy grievance is now at Stage 3, in Marilyn's office, and we are hoping for a meeting with her to discuss the implications of this change. The SCFA's concern includes not only the specific workload of English instructors, but of all instructors who can be required to teach 5 sections.

It's been a reasonably busy semester, especially with everyone trying to work out the implementation of the Restructuring Plan. I imagine it will be an even busier Spring, given the College's budget concerns. Nonetheless, come by and talk to me if you have any questions. That's what you're paying me the "big bucks" for ;)

Monica