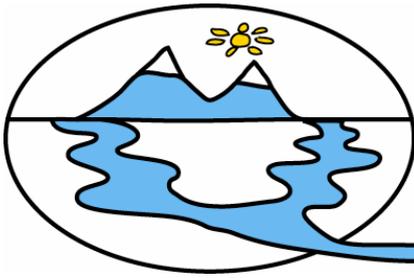


October, 2006



On Stream

Newsletter of the Selkirk College Faculty Association

Welcome Back Everyone!

This fall has seen everyone hit the ground running as we all launch ourselves into a new term of students, classes and various obligations and activities.

As VP Liaison, I will continue to keep the membership up to date on various situations of interest and importance to the SCFA through this newsletter. I also encourage you to use this forum as an opportunity to share insights and inspirations you may have as the year unfolds. To that end, please feel free to send me information you wish to have included in the newsletter. And now, here we go!

-Sally Glock, VP Liaison.

SCFA Executive Updates

Our April AGM resulted in some changes to our Executive and Standing Committee memberships as well as continued appointments.

Your SCFA Executive members are:

President: Tracy Punchard

VP Contract Negotiations: Lui Marinelli

VP Liaison: Sally Glock

Treasurer: John Stegman

College Board Observer : Pat Gibson

Retirement Issues Officer: Ross Bates

VP Negotiations: Doug Henderson

Reps to SCFA Standing Committees:

We are pleased to continue with our dedicated representatives and welcome our new reps.

Human Rights: Liz Ball

Disability Management Rehab: Linda Gomez, Sally Glock

Occupational Health & Safety: Rob McRae

Status of Women: Janet Mayr, Leanne Reitan

Education Policy: Don Parks

Employee Family Assistance: Deb Wandler, Donna Van Vliet

Status of Non-regular Faculty: Ian Parfitt

Professional Development: Rita Williams

Ponderings from the President

Hi Everyone,

On September 9th, FPSE began its *Better Funding Better Futures* campaign. Ultimately, the goal of the campaign is to see improved funding for post-secondary education in next year's budget. We also support the Canadian Federation of Students who is calling for a 10% reduction in tuition fees and free tuition for all ABE courses.

As part of the campaign, I made a presentation to the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services on September 25th and will present again to the final gathering of

this committee in Victoria. I will also be participating in the Campus 20/20 forums.

Your part in the campaign is simple. **Please take a moment to write Premier Campbell at premier@gov.bc.ca. Even easier, go to <http://www.fpse.ca/campaigns/> and put your name on the form letter.**

It's a numbers game that we will win by sending thousands of emails to the Premier. Stop! Send it now! Don't read on!

Need more convincing? Then consider the findings of a recent Ipsos-Reid poll of British Columbians across the province:

- **62%** of respondents think tuitions fees in BC are too high
- **70%** think that high tuitions are **preventing** students from getting the education they need to get ahead.
- **74%** think that students can't get the courses or programs they need to complete their education.
- **74%** think that students are taking on an unfair burden of debt.
- **90%** think that one of the ways to solve the skills shortage is for government to invest more in public colleges, universities and training institutes.
- **80%** support reducing tuitions.
- **84%** support more funding of post-secondary system to provide more course options and higher enrolments.

These numbers are incredibly high.

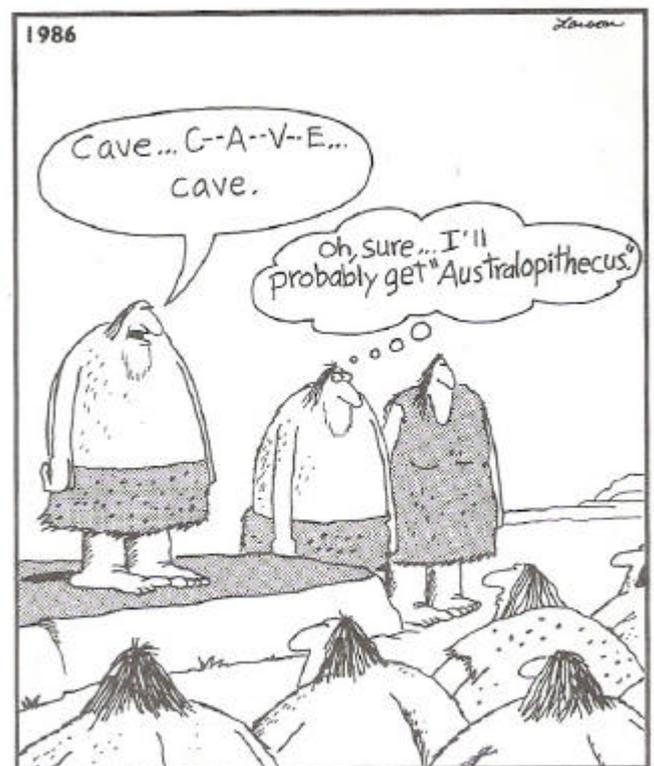
Let's face it. Over the last four years we've been cutting courses and contact hours to meet budget shortfalls and losing students to

unaffordable tuition rates. Our students deserve better.

Carole Taylor has some money to spend. Let's challenge her to invest in the development of "empowered, effective citizens."

Sincerely,

Tracy Punched
SCFA President



Primitive spelling bees

Profile of New VP Negotiations Interview with Doug Henderson

Please tell us about your personal life.

Single. Extended family in the Comox Valley and Prince George.

What is your favorite leisure activity?

Golf, which I was able to play a lot of this summer.

How did you get into this position with the SCFA?

I was initially nominated to run for the position of VP Negotiations which I did during the AGM election. I lost... When the successful candidate bowed out of the position, I was appointed.

Now that you are in this position what would you like to accomplish?

My goal is to help negotiate a great Collective Agreement this round of Bargaining for the membership.

When I or someone else comes to your office with a problem to solve or favor to ask, what sorts of bribes/gifts should we bring?

A rusty nail. Failing that, cash always works nicely.

What book is on your bedside table at the moment?

"Under Western Eyes" by Joseph Conrad and the "Sunday New York Times Crossword Omnibus."

Can you tell us what "words of wisdom" or "motto" you live by?

Keep your eye on the ball.

Bargaining Bin

The question on everyone's mind seems to be:
Will we get a signing bonus?

The successful negotiation of contracts for over 97% of the public sector has in part been attributed to the lure of the signing bonus. But the pressure to settle by the March 31st deadline works both ways. Employers know we are under pressure to achieve the signing bonus for our members, but we know our employers don't want to be the only obstacle to Finance Minister Carole Taylor's perfect signing record.

Where will it go? How will it end? We can't predict. We are cautiously optimistic given what has happened in other areas of the public sector which has seen wage increases between 8% and 14% over four or five years. But the ride will not be smooth. Members need to be prepared to make some tough decisions regarding bargaining priorities and to take a strike vote if and when the time comes. Do we seem strike happy? Not at all. But already we have been faced with the employers' proposal to gut the Common Agreement. The BCTF and BCGEU both had to take strike votes to push management to abandon concessions and to successfully settle their negotiations.

Our employers, by the way, already got their signing bonuses on April 1st. Our members should expect to cash in as well, but not at the expense of hard-won rights and working conditions. Concessions are not on our agenda.

Sincerely,
Doug Henderson, SCFA VP Negotiations
Tracy PUNCHARD, SCFA President

Coalition for Contingent Academic Labour Conference VII

I attended the seventh Coalition for Contingent Academic Labour (COCAL) conference this summer as your SCFA non-regular faculty representative. This conference is held every two years and is one of the main activities of the COCAL network of associations, unions and activists working for improvements in wages and working conditions for contract academic staff in Canada, the US, and Mexico. This year the conference was held at SFU Harbour Front in Vancouver.

Although I was unable to attend all events due to previous engagements, I was able to attend a plenary, a workshop, and a delightful Japanese buffet. During these sessions I discovered that intellectual freedom is, like democracy itself, under attack in America. I also found out that left wing thought and activism does still exist in academia, although not discussed as much as pension indexing, and that non-regular academics still face all the old issues like black-listing as well as new ones like contracting out.

The morning plenary session included presenters and panels. One presenter related his case history which sent a chill round the room. He was teaching a part-time global studies course at a university in Chicago where he allowed open discussion about Middle East issues. His students included both Muslims and Jews and various opinions about various topics were raised by the learners in what he felt was a respectful and inquiring way. One evening he received a phone call from his department head telling him that he could not allow discussion in the class, and that

Palestinians did not have a legitimate “side” in any discussion of the Middle East – and that Palestinians were in fact “animals”. He refused to comply with this order and so was fired shortly after. In his grievance he states that his intellectual freedom was curtailed. The administration does not deny the phone call or the comments about Palestinians but considers the issue to be a pedagogical one (the class should be lecture format, not discussion format) not an intellectual freedom one. After the presentation several audience members shared similar tales. Apparently there is an “Anti-Liberal” crusader (David Horowitz, author of *The Professors: The 101 Most Dangerous Academics in America*) attacking academics in the US much as the media has fallen under attack from concerted “Anti-Liberal” neo-conservatives. Parallels were drawn between the self-censoring that happens at the *New York Times* these days and what academics can or can not say in a class. It would seem that being at war trickles down to what can be said or not said in the US. As Canada increases its participation in the US War on Terror, I wonder if this sort of control of thought and messaging will become more prevalent north of the border as well.

At lunch I was able to meet non-regular instructors from across North America in an informal setting. A trend towards increasing the relative number of contingent academics was mentioned by many. This should alarm all academics because it’s such an obvious example of divide and conquer: two classes of workers are created, and the benefits, wages, and security are lowered for one class which slowly grows in relative size. The scale tips gradually towards management and eventually non-

contingent regular employees must make concessions as well. I also discovered that in Quebec all colleges have the same contract language in regards to non-regular faculty (the same benefits, wage scale, and regularization process, for instance), which is very different from the situation in BC.

After lunch I attended a meeting of the Canadian COCAL caucus to discuss Canadian issues. The session began with introductions and there were folks there from all across Canada, including graduate students who work as tutors or research assistants. The French-Canadian contingent made an eloquent plea to invite South America to the next COCAL conference. This year's COCAL conference was the first that Mexico attended, and there was a general feeling that the movement should be expanded to include the rest of the New World. Again, I feel fortunate that my Canada includes non-regular francophone academics – is it my imagination or are these people more passionate and idealistic than the rest of the bunch?

Ian Parfitt
SCFA Non-Regular Faculty Rep

FPSE AGM and Convention

May 16 - 19th 2006 Langara Faculty Association hosted the 26th FPSE AGM and Convention at Harrison Hot Springs Resort. Delegates in attendance from Selkirk College included Bev Onischak, Doug Henderson, Leanne Reitan, John Stegman and Sally Glock. Liz Ball was in attendance as the FPSE Chair of the Human Rights and Solidarity Committee.

Attending our choice of workshops reinforced our common experiences with such topics as the challenges of creating a work-life balance as a post secondary educator, emerging issues with ESL at the post secondary level, and practical strategies for dealing with management.

Reflections on the FPSE AGM

Attending the FPSE AGM as an SCFA delegate or observer provides opportunity to participate in decisions that direct the provincial union from that date forward to the next AGM, and also to meet and share ideas, solutions, resolutions on issues common with our provincial brothers and sisters, and increasingly, with our brethren in the larger international community.

Although my attendance at the May AGM was as Chair, FPSE Human Rights and International Solidarity Committee, I sat with and shared discussion with the SCFA delegation throughout the Convention & AGM. Thanks to my colleagues for including me in the SCFA delegation.

Maude Barlow's keynote address was challenging and enlightening. Maude presented a clear, well-informed perspective of Canada's relationship with the current administration in the United States, including concerns about the impact of closer ties on academic freedom in Canadian post-secondary institutions. If you wish to read further, borrow *Too close for comfort: Canada's future within fortress North America*, available soon in the library.

The Convention included two sets of workshops on current and emerging issues of relevance to post-secondary educators.

Workshop 1.4 was entitled, "Making the Connections: Unions and International Solidarity." The presenter was Barbara Wood, currently executive director of Co-development Canada, worker with Co-dev for 7 years, and involved in Latin American solidarity work for more than 25 years. We, SCFA union, are members of Co-dev Canada through FPSE, and contribute through that membership to Co-dev's work in Latin America, "Building partners for global justice." You are invited to read about the projects supported by us through Co-dev at <http://www.codev.org>. Barbara spoke about Co-dev's work, in Honduras, Nicaragua, and elsewhere.

On a related topic, Barbara had also been asked to describe the International Solidarity Fund that her union (CUPE) has initiated. The HRISC had put forward a recommendation to FPSE's Presidents' Council that an International Solidarity Fund be established by FPSE, and this was our opportunity to find out how CUPE's fund was established, how it was funded, and how decisions were made. Ms. Wood was quick to point out that their Fund was based on solidarity, not charity, that it was established to support mutuality, and a two-way relationship. Member education on the impacts of globalization on public sector workers created links with public sector workers in Latin America, and at the 2005 CUPE convention, members supported a dues increase to build the Fund to a sustainable amount.

In support of the HRISC resolution, Presidents' Council passed a resolution to: "work with locals to identify the resources necessary to establish an International Solidarity Fund within FPSE that provides meaningful and effective support for progressive initiatives outside of Canada." (This will form the bulk of work undertaken by HRISC this academic year.)

A second workshop I attended was "International partnerships in post-secondary education: how much should we worry?" - led by lawyer Leo McGrady. Heads up!!, was the order of the day. When faculty are "given" overseas opportunities, only to be told "the collective agreement doesn't apply outside of BC" or "this involves a company separate from College or University XXX", it's time to review the law on contracting out and successorship. We were given questions to ask, documents to request, etc. A very interesting look into a growing "business" opportunity for public post-secondary institutions in BC.

One more issue that came to FPSE and HRISC over this past year is that of Mandatory Retirement. An FPSE staff rep has written a discussion paper on the topic, available at http://www.fpse.ca/resources/pdfs/060329man_retire.pdf. This issue bears watching, both on the federal and provincial scenes. There does not appear to be a simple solution to this.

In solidarity,
Liz Ball, SCFA Human Rights rep.

The Making of a Steward

At the end of August, eight brave SCFA souls spent a day taking part in a steward training course on the Castlegar campus. The course was put on by David Piasta, our staff representative from the Federation of Post-Secondary Educators (FPSE). Although titled a steward training course, its purpose wasn't necessarily to train new stewards, but to provide to those who will listen a better understanding of how our collective works.

David brought some 20 years of experience to the table and used past events/grievances to give greater context to topics within his presentation. He dealt with topics such as a steward's role and responsibilities, duty of representation, what is a collective agreement, and what is a grievance.

We ended with a group exercise where we played steward in a fictitious case that, like an onion, had multiple layers. It provided us with a great example of how issues are often more complicated than originally presented.

Overall, the workshop was a useful exercise to assist the attendees in better understanding their collective agreement and how it gets used by a steward. Who knows? This could lead to new school stewards. Thanks to those members who came out and took part in the workshop.

Lui Marinelli
SCFA VP Contract Negotiations

The "Other" PD Fund

In the last round of bargaining, one of the benefits that came out of the common table was an "addition" to our PD fund. Currently, the College contributes to our PD fund an amount of 2% of our salaries. From this fund we request and hopefully receive financial support to go to conferences, work on a thesis, etc. For the most part, we run this PD fund.

The addition is a 0.6% management controlled fund that does not roll over every year. Across the province, the amount of PD available to members varies. In an effort to make sure everyone has something, the government gave this addition, but wanted to retain some control over how it gets used. Currently, it would appear that Selkirk College management will set up a review committee that consists of management and SCFA members that will vet each application and recommend to the VP Academic those projects which should be funded. So in the end, management has control but we certainly have important input on those decisions.

Members of the SCFA executive have met with management to iron out the details and hopefully we are getting close. However, in speaking to other unions, some have made very good use of this fund since it began...we have yet to spend a penny.

Management has indicated that it would like to see the money used to support group activities (i.e., program, school, or college-wide initiatives). So if you have some ideas that you believe would benefit a number of people or groups and are looking for money to bring in a speaker, or to pay for facilities, etc., then you

