

MAFA NEWSLETTER

Mount Allison Faculty Association

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December 15, 2010

It's been **169** days since the expiration of our two collective agreements...

*Season's Greetings!
Happy Holidays!*

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



season.

I want to wish happy holidays to all our members. Now is a particularly busy time of the year, with exams, marking, and preparations for next semester's courses. But I hope we will be able to find time to spend with family and friends over the holiday

Rick Hudson
President

MAFA HOLDS SUCCESSFUL GENERAL MEETING

We had a successful General Meeting on December 7th, with a large turnout. Association business was quickly dealt with. As the Treasurer announced, the MAFA defence fund has risen to an amount well over what is required in the by-laws, so MAFA dues will decrease starting in January.

The next meeting of the membership will be in

January, where the negotiating team will go over the state of negotiations. This meeting will probably occur after the meetings of the Conciliation Board in mid-January.

REPORT ON THE CONCILIATION BOARD

On December 9th and 10th, the Conciliation Board met in Moncton with the two negotiating teams. The Board acted as a conciliator and encouraged the two sides to continue negotiating. A few more articles were signed off. But important issues, such as salaries, have not been signed off, and there still are a lot of issues on the table.

The Board will next meet in mid-January. It is our understanding that after the mid-January meeting, the Board will write its report in time for the Minister's January 31st deadline.



Under the Act, the Board was supposed to make its final report in the 14 days following its constitution. MAFA has agreed to support the Board's request for an extension to this legal deadline. We accept the Minister's deadline of January 31st.

MAFA NEGOTIATIONS UPDATE

Between the time of our last newsletter and the meeting of the Conciliation Board, negotiations continued, twice a week. Some progress was made, but the big issues are still outstanding. Following the

THE CAUT DEFENCE FUND: STRIKE PAY AND STRIKE SUPPORT

Since 1984, MAFA has been a member of the CAUT Defence Fund, a trust fund used to provide strike pay when Canadian academic staff unions go on strike or are locked out. The Fund has been active for over 30 years. Its current assets exceed \$21 million in spite of having paid well over \$3 million in strike benefits in the last three years.

meeting of the Board in Moncton, negotiations continued here in Sackville, with two meetings occurring earlier this week. But there is now virtually no chance of an agreement by Christmas.

POTENTIAL JOB ACTION AND THE BARGAINING CYCLE

Some have asked how the calling of a Conciliation Board affects the bargaining cycle.

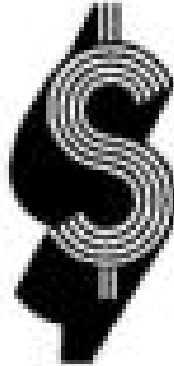
The main effect is to delay the process leading to job action.

Prior to the government's revival of the use of conciliation boards, the report of the provincial conciliation officer that he/she was unable to get the two parties to agree to a contract led to the Minister's issuance of a "no board" report (i.e., that she would not call a conciliation board). Under the law, job action could be initiated by either party (the union or the employer) one week after the "no board" report.

The same one-week delay applies after the report of the Conciliation Board. This means that one-week after the Board reports, MAFA could hold a strike vote, and the Employer could lock out the faculty and professional librarians.

Lock-outs have occurred in Canadian university labour disputes, most recently in our own province at Saint Thomas University in Fredericton. But they tend to be rare.

Strikes are more common. Many of us remember strikes at the Université de Moncton, Saint Thomas University, Acadia University, Cape Breton University, Dalhousie University, etc. And, of course, we remember the 1992 and 1999 strikes at Mount Allison. Recent job actions in Maritime universities have tended to last from 3 to 6 weeks, but some have been shorter. The last strike at Mount Allison lasted 23 days. No strike at a Canadian university has ever resulted in the loss of a semester.



When a member union tells the Defence Fund that it may soon be on strike, or be locked out, the Trustees of the Fund meet (by conference call) and approve the grant of daily strike pay, a loan to the member union to cover payment of insured benefits that an employer may threaten to cut, and a general purpose operating loan to the member union. This last is always a symbolic "giant cheque"

for \$1 million (that is backed up by the real thing).

The Defence Fund pays a member union (e.g., MAFA) at the rate of \$80 per day per insured bargaining unit member (seven days a week). (MAFA currently pays a monthly premium for 170 members, which is more than our full-time complement and also covers our part-time members.)

The (tax-free) amount paid daily to individual members by MAFA would be higher for several reasons. MAFA has wisely set aside well over \$1000 per member in its own Defence Fund. Importantly, other academic staff unions send generous support (MAFA always sends support to striking sister unions) and that support is proportionately higher here because MAFA has relatively few members. Finally, some bargaining unit members will be on leave, and a few may not join the picket lines.

MAFA's Defence Fund and the additional loans from the CAUT Defence Fund also mean that MAFA can provide loans to MAFA members who might need extra help. The daily strike pay is intended to cover current expenses while on strike. At the end of a strike (and academic staff strikes always end within a few weeks), a settlement often includes a "signing bonus" that will help to cover longer term

commitments like mortgages. At the end of our 1999 strike, members received a special Research-Travel-Entertainment (RTE) account of \$1800, which was tax-free if used for research, etc.

The CAUT Defence Fund has another important way of expressing support for a striking union. On Fridays during an academic staff strike, the Defence Fund sends Trustees from across the country as "flying pickets" to join the picket lines of a striking member union. Flying pickets often bring cheques as well as expressing solidarity and telling about experiences elsewhere. MAFA members have joined the picket lines at most academic staff strikes and that experience has been helpful and gratifying.

MAFA PRESIDENT PARTICIPATES IN SESSION ON "NAVITAS" AND "STUDY GROUP"

On November 24th, just before CAUT Council, Rick Hudson attended a session organised by the Carleton University union dealing with the activities of Navitas, Study Group, and other private for-profit training organisations operating on the campuses of public universities in Canada. These for-profit organisations offer international students English-language training as well as some first year university courses, and they often promise guaranteed admission into a Canadian university.

Attempts to set up such "pathway programs" have occurred at Simon Fraser University (Fraser



International College), the University of Manitoba (International College of Manitoba), the University of Windsor (where it was

rejected), Carleton University, and elsewhere. Such programmes are aimed at international students who would not normally be admissible to universities here.

Those who are admissible simply apply directly to the university. As is often the case with private for-profit training organisations, there is concern about fraud,

quality, poor student results, high student debt levels, and the use by for-profit organisations of buildings and laboratories paid for by public universities.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS, 2010-11

Please mark these dates on your calendar:

Spring Annual General Meeting, Friday, April 8th, 3 pm, Avard Dixon G12

Retiring Members' Party, Friday, April 8th, 4:30 pm University Club

MAFA 2010-2011 EXECUTIVE

Richard Hudson - President (Commerce)

Gina Grandy - Vice-President (Commerce)

Peter Brown - Past President (English)

Robert Rosebrugh - Treasurer (Math and CS)

Jeff Lilburn - Collective Bargaining (Library)

Loralea Michaelis - Grievance (Political Science)

San Patten - Unit 2 (Continuous Learning)

David Thomas - Membership (Political Science/ International Relations)