

MAFA NEWSLETTER

Mount Allison Faculty Association
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December 2017

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

As the end of the Fall term is upon us, I will take a moment to reflect on some MAFA activities undertaken this term.

Since publication of the October issue of the Newsletter, MAFA hosted the Fair Employment Week Research and Creative Activity Fair to highlight the research, scholarship and creative activity of our part-time faculty and librarian colleagues. The event was very well attended, and I wish to thank all who participated and also Geoff Martin and Toni Roberts for making it all happen. In early November, MAFA held a discussion of the new Career Development Review (CDR) process. We are grateful to all who contributed. Your comments and insights will help inform the work of MAFA's representatives on the joint Committee on CDRs. If you were not able to attend and would still like to share your thoughts, please be in touch.

As president I've had the privilege of attending a number of FNBFA and CAUT events on your behalf. I attended FNBFA Board meetings in Fredericton in September and November, and in October I participated in a two-day FNBFA retreat in Rexton. The event was designed to provide newer members of the Board of Directors, such as myself, with an overview of the history and mission of the Federation and to set priorities and objectives for the next few years. FNBFA's mission is twofold: it serves as the voice of faculty and academic librarians in the province by working to advance their professional interests and by working to improve the quality of New Brunswick's post-

secondary education system. Discussions of priorities and objectives touched on a number of issues including the decline in provincial government funding to universities and the lack of transparency with regards to funding models and formulas used by the province. There was also discussion of the narrowing discourse surrounding post-secondary education in New Brunswick and how this discourse affects administrative decision-making at our institutions.

For example, the Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour's (PETL) *Strategic Plan for 2015-2018* places a great deal of emphasis on the role universities should play in meeting labour market needs. Such rhetoric is not new and is not unique to New Brunswick: there is a good deal of scholarship examining shifts in the discourse used to describe the role universities play in our society. Much of this work has been concerned with shifts in public policy and with the impact that neoliberal ideology and increasing ties between universities and industry have on articulations of the purpose of higher education. Of course, universities do play a crucially important role in helping students develop knowledge and critical perspectives and abilities that help them pursue successful careers, but the growing emphasis on job preparation risks pushing to the margins other activities and important societal functions of the university. Our universities are not merely sites of vocational training focused on the individual successes of students, but language used to describe them increasingly positions them as just that. By doing so, the idea of the university as a public good gives way to the idea of higher education as a

private good.

It must also be acknowledged that emphasis on the role universities play in helping students prepare for the job market is emerging at a time when universities are themselves becoming sites of precarious employment. In the U.S, the percentage of faculty in non-permanent, contingent positions has reached 70%.* At Mount Allison, as noted in the last MAFA newsletter, there is a growing reliance on non-permanent and stipendiary appointments. According to the draft Academic Plan now under discussion, the administration is planning further reductions to the permanent academic staff complement: “1:1 replacement is unlikely over the coming 3-4 years” (p. 13). Promises about the career prospects of university graduates lose some of their weight when an increasing percentage of the academic staff who teach these graduates themselves face uncertain employment situations.

In November, I attended CAUT Council as MAFA’s delegate. This three-day meeting is held twice a year in Ottawa and is the venue for discussion of CAUT policy and activities and also for the exchange of information about conditions and issues faced by academic staff associations across the country. There was, for example, lengthy discussion of an ongoing situation at Carleton University, with Council voting to censure the University’s Board of Governors unless changes are made to its restrictive code of conduct for Board members. Delegates also heard about difficult situations faced by academic staff in Argentina, Turkey and, closer to home, Québec, where proposed changes to the Université de Montréal Charter threaten to severely undermine collegial governance processes at the UdeM. With Council happening not long after the five-week faculty and librarian strike at Ontario colleges, issues that led to the strike were top of mind throughout the three days of meetings: in particular, the need to resist and reverse the casualization of academic labour and the need to protect and defend academic freedom. As we know, and as Toni Roberts discusses in more detail below, the Ontario college strike ended with the provincial government’s introduction of back-to-work legislation. Still, the collective action of faculty and librarians at 28

colleges has had a significant impact – an impact recognized with a standing ovation following the OPSEU representative’s report to Council. As noted elsewhere by OPSEU President Warren Thomas, “the strike spurred a huge conversation about precarious work.” It is a conversation that reached across provincial borders, and it is a conversation that must and will continue.

Next term, the MAFA executive will be turning its attention to a review of the MAFA Constitution and By-laws. Such reviews occur periodically to ensure that MAFA continues to carry out its mission and objectives as effectively as possible. Any recommendations for constitutional changes resulting from the review will be presented to the membership in advance of the AGM in April. We will also begin planning preparations for the next round of collective bargaining.

Finally, please plan on attending the General Meeting on Friday December 8 at noon and the end-of-term party at the University Club at 4:30 that same day. I look forward to seeing you all there.

Jeff Lilburn
President

* AAUP, “Scary Stats on Contingency in Higher Ed,” <https://www.aaup.org/sites/default/files/The-spooky-sad-stats-on-the-state-of-Contingency-5.png>

COMING EVENTS, 2017-18

Friday 8 December 12 noon (Room: AVDX G12),
MAFA General Membership Meeting

Friday 8 December 4:30pm, University Club,
MAFA End of term social event

2018

Friday 13 April 12 noon (Room: AVDX G12),
MAFA Annual General Meeting and Election of
Executive for 2018-2019

Friday 13 April 4:30pm University Club, Retiring
Members' Party

JOINT LIAISON REPORT

Since the last newsletter, there have been four Joint Liaison meetings on August 24, September 28, October 25, and November 23, 2017. Present at all meetings were Katherine DeVere-Pettigrew, Leah Garnett, Diana Hamilton, Geoff Martin, and Jeff Ollerhead.

We have discussed the following topics:

- Mutually agreed upon changes to the collective agreement
- The challenge of benefits for long-service Part-Time faculty
- The implementation of student surveys as mandated by the collective agreement and the Senate
- eXplorance Blue
- Re-introduction of Salary-as-Research Grant
- Use of Romeo by Part-Time members
- Questions regarding joint appointments and how they affect letters of appointment, department composition, and tenure and promotion review
- Implementation of the new Career Development Process
- Timely administration of Part-time Continuing Appointment recommendations
- Issues regarding letters of appointment and timetable listings
- Replacement of support staff
- Implications of the possible termination of the Anthropology Department
- The supervision of CUPE 3433 members by heads and program directors
- Ongoing concerns regarding correspondence courses and their administration
- Sabbatical replacements

Respectfully,
Leah Garnett

GRIEVANCE REPORT

I want to thank members for contacting me about their concerns and issues that have arisen over the

last few months. Our many discussions have led to a number of grievances filed as discussed below. Indeed, we have been busy and by we, I mean myself, members of the Grievance Committee (Dave Thomas, Lorelea Michaelis and Anne LePage), and Geoff Martin who combined have provided me with good advice as we move through the grievance procedures. I thank them for their work and support and members for bringing issues to our attention.

2017-01 - This individual grievance surrounds potential violations of various articles of the FT Agreement including accommodations in the workplace and remains unresolved after the Step 1 meeting. It is now moving to the Step 2 phase.



Detail from the cover of a CD played at the Research and Creative Activity Fair in October, with part-time member Karin Aurell.

2017-02 – MAFA filed a Union grievance (September 06, 2017) regarding the employer's decision to engage a private company, eXplorance, to manage the administration of student surveys. MAFA has raised several concerns with this Employer initiative. These concerns include issues related to academic and intellectual freedom, members' privacy and collegial rights among other things. At the Union's request, the Employer has agreed to 1) extend the Memorandum of Agreement for the implementation of Appendix B questions until January 2018; and, 2) postpone the implementation of eXplorance Blue until January 2018. The implications of this are twofold. First, student questionnaires for Fall 2017 were conducted as they have been in the last few years. Second, it has allowed the Union and the Employer time to

further explore the issues. To date, discussions have been constructive and both the Union and Employer have exchanged proposals for how to potentially move forward. Discussions are ongoing and MAFA will keep members informed of developments.

2017-03 - This individual grievance was filed on September 06, 2017 and surrounds irregularities in the formation and conduct of a part-time hiring committee. While the Employer denied the grievance, they nonetheless did agree to corrective measures on November 30th thus settling matters.

2017-04 – This individual grievance was filed on September 07, 2017 and surrounds issues rooted in workplace harassment procedures. Step 1 and Step 2 meetings with the Employer have failed to resolve matters. At the Union’s request, the Employer has agreed to stop the clock on this grievance until December 15, 2017.

2017-05 – MAFA filed a Union grievance on October 18, 2017 regarding actions related to one of the Deans with what appears to be the implementation of a new Evaluation system for our members. This is of great concern for members because we believe several articles of the collective agreement have been breached. Our meeting with the Employer has not resolved matters and at the Union’s request, the Employer has agreed to stop the clock on this grievance until December 15, 2017.

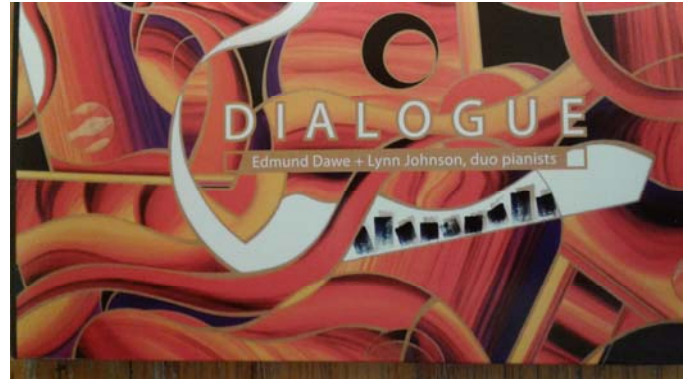
2017-06 – This individual grievance was filed on October 19, 2017 and surrounds contractual issues for a member. MAFA continues to work with the Employer to resolve this grievance.

2017-07 – This individual grievance has been filed by a member who is a respondent in a workplace harassment complaint. The subject matter addresses the tension between academic freedom and behavior that may be defined as harassment under the Employer’s policy.

As usual, MAFA is here to help members. If you have any concerns or questions about potential grievances, please do not hesitate to contact either me (malevesque@mta.ca), or members of MAFA’s

grievance committee, Dave Thomas, Loralea Michaelis and Anne LePage. We are here to help.

Sincerely,
Mario Levesque
Grievance Officer



Detail from the cover of a CD played at the Research and Creative Activity Fair in October, with part-time member Lynn Johnson.

FORCING WORK: When Striking Unions Meet Neoliberal Legislation

We all know it. The ability to strike is central to fair and democratic relations. When that ability is denied, fairness and democracy are eroded if not entirely lost. This is not an overstatement. This is, unfortunately, the reality of neoliberalism. Neoliberalism has saturated discourse and relations between employers and employees/unions but it has also entered into the gemeinschaft: this means the public discourse and public opinion on unions is one that finds them to be old-fashioned, as having outlived their usefulness, as even being in contradiction with free market development.

Public discourse is reflected and re/produced in our media. National newspapers and online sources reporting on the recent Ontario college faculty strike focused on the length of the strike, disruption to students, frustration from administrators and concerns about tuition rebates. Although there was some great support from students, there was also pressure from them demanding faculty return to work in media campaigns and also from the Ontario

MAFA 2017-2018 EXECUTIVE

Jeff Lilburn, President (Library)

Leah Garnett, Vice-President (Fine Arts)

**Andrew Irwin, Past President (Mathematics and
Computer Science)**

Stephen Law, Treasurer (Economics)

Diana Hamilton, Collective Bargaining (Biology)

**Mario Levesque, Grievance Officer (Politics and
International Relations)**

**Lori Ann Roness, Membership
(Sociology/MASSIE)**

Toni Roberts, Part-time Officer (Sociology)



government as well. There was little, if any discussion, on the importance of unions in supporting working relationships, in protecting workers, or on issues of justice, fairness and equity in the media. In fact, back to work legislation was often reported on without any comment on the troubling nature of such legislation and how it undermines the very core of the role of a union: to act in solidarity as a whole to strike when warranted.

Back to work legislation is mired in neoliberal discourse and action. The intention of striking, never taken lightly by any union employee, is to leverage the power of ceasing work, production or educating. The intent is to place pressure on the employer to make changes: to conditions, to working hours, to unfair hiring and so on. In the case of the recent strike of Ontario college instructors, the main issues were job security and academic freedom. How, in fact, can one argue against this? How can a government pass legislation to force people back to work to insecure jobs? To provide more context, 75% of college faculty in Ontario are on short-term contract. Cobbling together a livable salary at five or six thousand a course as a stipendiary faculty member is exceptionally difficult if not impossible. Not knowing if after a 9 month contract you will have work the next academic year, or health care or pension benefits, is not a trivial concern. For example, as reported by the Ottawa Citizen, Larry Hoedl makes about \$20K per year and has been teaching for 11 years as a contract instructor at Algonquin College. Forcing faculty back to work when many are barely scraping by is quite honestly alarming. Government should have the rights and welfare of the people it governs as its highest concern. Instead it is forcing people back to jobs that are insecure, untenable and poorly paid. Rather than celebrating back to work legislation as getting things “back to normal” for students, their families and the education sector, we should look at such legislation with disdain and contempt. The only way to truly produce a just society is to resist these neoliberal approaches and to come together in solidarity more than ever before.

Toni Roberts
Part-time Officer