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Bargaining in Dangerous Times — Rob Woznura

Well, depending upon your ratification vote, bargaining is over. And what a frustrating time was had by all. We finally pounded out a deal on April 30th. I will briefly outline what we accomplished.

The contract is a two-year deal, which means we have one more year to go on this contract. It includes a 1% increase, retroactive from last July 1. The biggest thing is that we have achieved an actual RSP contribution for all our members that, depending upon arrangements with Sun Life, will begin either July 1 or Aug. 1. Initially, this is a 3+1 plan, meaning AU contributes 3% and we contribute 1%. Next year, it will become a 4+2 plan. This new plan replaces the 2% we used to receive in January, where a lump sum simply appeared in the pay and was taxed with the rest of our pay.

As you know, AU has insisted on the furlough idea, even if that really doesn't make much sense in terms of how we work (and their bargaining team acknowledged as much). We have tried to negotiate something that is equitable to all our members. Essentially, part deals with pay and part deals with time. For the next year, instead of 8% holiday pay being on your paycheque, that number will be 4%. That way, we distribute the loss in pay that a furlough implies equally among all our members and equally throughout the year. The university will close for two weeks at Christmas and on July 2, making a closure of 5 business days. That leaves you to choose one week where you will not work. Note that you have paid for this time off, so please take the time off. The other thing is that your block pay (for tutors) should not be affected by this time off for, as already mentioned, we are buying it with the holiday pay. That means that everyone needs to look at their cheques to make sure that block pay has not been deducted for that one week off. The situation is far from ideal, but being allowed to take a week off of your choosing is preferable to an extra week's closure by the university.

We managed to keep the benefits protected and off the table. I will remind you that AU originally wanted to cap their contributions, which would have resulted, in the long term, either in diminished coverage or greater individual contributions by our members.

One significant achievement is that we now effectively control the PD fund. By this, I am not referring to your private PD funds, but the ones you can access by applying. Our committee will now vet the applications for appropriateness and



worthiness independently of AU administration. Their function will simply be to dispense the funds.

The dark horizon, of course, has been the call centre issue. This issue was one of the reasons for our frustration with the AU bargaining team. On the April 30th negotiations, their team finally dropped the façade and openly admitted that they were contacting Alex Kondra during their caucus sessions. It would have been much easier for all if a member of the AU executive had been present from the outset.

The problem with our situation is that AU is entitled to impose, under their right to manage, any form of delivery on us with little notice (the increasingly prevalent “you’ve been consulted/ here’s your notice” phenomenon). As you know from our last report, we have been trying to extend that timeline and increase the possibility for input and negotiation. We have settled on a side memorandum of understanding of three consultation months for any changes to mode of delivery followed by a two-month preparatory period before actual changes. This 5-month period will be initiated by the first meeting between AU executive and CUPE executive on the matter. As AU’s bargaining team strongly hinted that Alex Kondra was originally contemplating imposing a period of consultation on May 1, regardless of any actual meetings, this is something.

Given the current climate for post-secondary in this province (and all who work at other institutions know of this toxic climate), we feel that we have protected our members the best we could given the tools we have at our disposal. You will now be the judge through the ratification vote.

Our Rebel Girls — Rob Woznura, Ernie Jacobson

Joe Hill, in the early 1900s, wrote in a song for Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, “It’s great to fight for freedom/With a rebel girl.” And our local has two of the best: Yessy Byl and Brenda Kuzio.

These two were recently recognized at the Alberta Federation of Labour Convention, with Yessy being awarded the May Day Solidarity Award and Brenda being awarded the AFL’s International Women’s Day Award.



Yessy, aside from the extensive time she volunteers for our local, including heading the latest round of bargaining, has been a Labour lawyer for 27 years, working for groups as various as the Non - Academic Staff Association at the U of A, CUPE Alberta, and the UNA. Of particular note

is the work she has done on the temporary foreign worker issue, penning two important reports on the issue in 2007 and 2009 for the AFL. But her contribution is more than academic, for Yessy works as an educator with the Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre, giving workshops for immigrant youth, temporary foreign workers as well as immigrant women. She also volunteers her time and skills for the Community Legal Centre, including staffing evening legal clinics as well as assisting with AISH settlement processing clinics. Not only that, but she provides extensive pro bono work to temporary foreign workers.



Yessy's work has already been recognized by various groups, including the following:

- 2013: Law Society of Alberta Distinguished Service Award for pro bono legal work.
- 2010: Rise Award for Community Outreach – Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers and Norquest College
- 2009: Distinguished Service Award, Edmonton Community Legal Centre
- 2007: Eileen Nash Memorial Award, awarded for community volunteer legal work, Edmonton Bar Association

I will also add that she has a tremendous button collection to boot.



Brenda, for her part, has worked as a Labour lawyer/activist for 34 years. She is utterly fearless and has represented countless members and unions with grievances, bargaining and applications before the Alberta Labour Relations Board, the Alberta Human Rights Commission, as well as Professional Discipline Councils.

In our local, she is one of those people who immediately steps up to the plate and has served in various capacities, such as member of Complaint Review Committee (joint union/employer committee), Union representative on development of University Harassment policy, member of bargaining committee on two occasions, member of labour management committee since 2001. Many of our members know Brenda through the grievance process and have experienced her dedication and ability to protect workers firsthand.

In 1980, she served on the Steering Committee for the Government of Alberta when it developed the "Respectful Workplace" program – which won the Premier's Award for Excellence.

Brenda started her work in labour activism while still a law student, working as a jail guard and member of AUPE to pay the bills from 1979 to 2005. As a jail guard, Brenda worked at Belmont, Fort Saskatchewan and the Edmonton Remand Centre. During this time, Brenda was a pioneer in cross sex guarding, being the first female guard to be assigned successfully to work with male inmates in provincial jails. During this time, she also testified on behalf of women jail guards who filed a Human Rights complaint against the RCMP due to restrictions of employment as RCMP officers in smaller centres.

Brenda, in her own words, "Stood shoulder to shoulder with my brothers and sisters on the picket lines during the illegal public sector in 1980, knowing full well I could be jeopardizing my ability to become a lawyer in the province of Alberta by doing this. Stayed out the duration of the strike despite this being the only source of income for university."

As well, Brenda served as Co-chair of the Lancaster House Calgary Labour Arbitration and Policy in 2011-12, regularly serves as a volunteer teacher at the week-long CLC Labour Arbitration School in Jasper (work which included updating the existing course), regularly presents at labour-related conferences, and frequently gives presentations to unions about collective bargaining and grievance handling and how to be a good representative for members.

Congratulations from our local to Yessy and Brenda. They are inspiring models of union activism.



CUPE 3911 Participates in Alberta Federation of Labour Convention

Three members of the CUPE 3911 Executive, Glynnis Lieb, Ernie Jacobson, and Dougal MacDonald, participated in the three day bi-annual Alberta Federation of Labour Convention at the Shaw Centre in Edmonton. The AFL is the labour centre for most of the major unions in Alberta. Members of the Athabasca University Faculty Association (AUFA) also attended as part of the AFL.

The AFL Convention discussed a number of important policy papers, including ones on a new direction for development of the oil sands, the problems with the federal temporary foreign workers, and why we should oppose the impending privatization of the south leg of the Edmonton light rail transit system (LRT) being built through use of a public-private funding model (P3). The Convention passed a number of important resolutions, including one opposing the provincial government's continuing attacks on post-secondary education that was submitted by CUPE 3911 (see below). Several people spoke to the resolution, including CUPE co-chair Dougal MacDonald, and it was passed unanimously by the assembled delegates. It had already been passed by the Edmonton and District Labour Council (EDLC) on April 18.

Two members of CUPE 3911 were highly honoured at the Convention. Brenda Kuzio won the AFL's Women's Day Award for her long service to the cause of women workers and the labour movement. Yessy Byl won the May Day Award for her long service to the labour movement. CUPE 3911 is lucky to have such leading labour activists as its members. CUPE 3911 also participated in the militant march and rally in support of the striking AUPE remand centre workers, held at the Labour Relations Board office during the convention. On Sunday April 28, CUPE 3911 attended the annual Day of Mourning ceremony for workers killed and injured on the job, held at the new monument erected by EDLC in the park at 116th St and 100 Ave.

CUPE 3911 members are strongly encouraged to go to the AFL website to find out more about what was discussed and decided on at the convention and to follow the website in the coming months to remain informed.



Membership cards

A reminder to all to sign the membership forms that Jackie sent you and to put them in the already-stamped envelope provided and drop them into those magical boxes with CANADA POST written on them.

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