



Volume 5 Issue 3

Links:

[CUPE Local 3911](#)

[CUPE Alberta](#)

[CUPE National](#)

[Calgary District Labour Council](#)

[Edmonton District Labour Council](#)

[Alberta Federation of Labour](#)

[Canadian Labour Congress](#)

The CUPE newsletter is published by CUPE Local 3911. We welcome your submissions, letters and comments. Opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors and not necessarily those of CUPE Local 3911

Editor: Natalie Sharpe

Paid More Frequently, but am I Getting Paid for all of my Work?

In January, we waited a long time for the first cheque in our new bi-weekly cycle. And now in March, we are being paid three times - but how many of us will diligently check to ensure that each pay amount is correct? It was easy to follow the Newton Pay Report monthly to see if it aligned with one's pay cheque, but who wants to check it every two weeks? Be aware that mistakes are made! We have already heard from members who felt they were being underpaid. It is up to you to check your pay and report it as soon as possible if something seems to be missing. Check with your local if you find something missing and need some help.

“Time after Time You Refuse to Even Listen” To my Time Sheet

This information is for tutors or academic experts who work for AU in multiple capacities (for committees, projects, etc.) and fill in “time sheets” in order to be paid for that work.

Unless Banner has been set so that it accommodates your multiple roles (unlikely) you need to fill in your time sheets as you have been doing and send them to the appropriate supervisors (by project or activity) with a note explaining why they are getting the time sheet this way and referring them to Amber Oko, payroll coordinator for further information and help.

Telling and Honouring our Story as Organized Workers

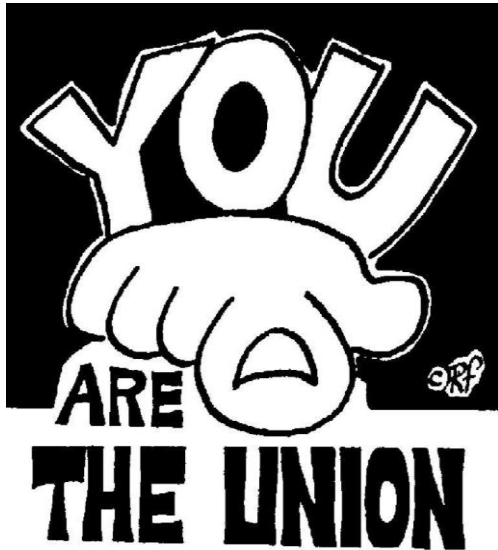
There are many ways you can contribute to your newsletter. You can tell the story of our union labour history, a day in your life as a tutor or academic expert - rotten or good. And there are many ways to do it: storytelling, comics, poetry, prose, song. Our work his/herstory is important to chronicle. Here is one sample of a comic style “graphic history project” that may inspire you to add life to your newsletter. See the Graphic History Collective Project #8: An Entirely Different Kind of Labour Union: The Service, Office, and Retail Workers’ Union of Canada <http://graphichistorycollective.com/projects/graphic-history-project/an-entirely-different-kind-of-labour-union/>



Next CUPE GENERAL Membership Meeting:

**Saturday, April 11th @
9:30a.m.**

Teleconference Available



COCAL XII Edmonton 2016

The Coalition of Contingent Academic Labour (COCAL) is coming here for a truly 53 degrees North Canadian experience in August 2016. The planning committee is active, a venue is being sought, and we will be updating you frequently in our newsletter during these planning stages. So reserve your August 2016 summer vacation in Edmonton for the best collegial experience among fellow post-secondary contingent workers who really care about the future of higher education.

The Alberta Disadvantage for Working Women

The gender wage gap for is worse for working women in Alberta than any other Canadian province, according to a recent (March 2015) Parkland Institute study: "The Alberta Disadvantage: Gender, Taxation, and Income Inequality". The gap is a shocking 42% according to the study's author, Queen's University law professor Kathleen Lahey.

Alberta's shift to a single rate tax rate in 2001 created a real disadvantage for working women. This "detaxation" policy is responsible for our current revenue crisis and has shifted the lion's share of the tax burden on those who can least afford it, primarily women. Women carry the extra burden of 35 hours of unpaid domestic/childcare work per week (double the unpaid work load for men).

http://parklandinstitute.ca/research/summary/the_alberta_disadvantage

"At the present time, gender income gaps in Alberta remain the largest in Canada. In fact, Alberta women have still not regained the level of income equality they had attained over two decades ago, in 1993. In contrast, women's income ratios in the rest of Canada, and, in recent years, in Québec, have risen well above Alberta's high 1993 levels. These figures demonstrate that despite the burgeoning wealth in the province, Alberta women's shares of incomes have fallen behind whether compared with men in Alberta or with women elsewhere in Canada. Neither trend shows signs of changing." (P 10) Women spend 35 hrs per week also in unpaid labour, double what men do.



Dr. Dave's Honourary Degree in Education Wrecking

by Dougal MacDonald

The offering of an “honorary degree” is a traditional practice at a number of universities, including Athabasca University. The AU website states: “AU awards honorary doctorates to people who have made significant lifelong contributions to endeavours that are consistent with the mandate of the university. They may have distinguished themselves in areas such as education, the arts, science, public service.” The stated mandate of AU is, in part: “Athabasca University is committed to collaborating with other key stakeholders to ensure a seamless and responsive advanced education system that provides high-quality learning opportunities in support of lifelong learning.”

This year, 2015, AU will give an honorary degree to former interim Conservative Premier and former Minister of Innovation and Advanced Education, Dave Hancock. Hancock was a 17-year cabinet member of the same Tory government which has been underfunding Alberta post-secondary education for decades and which savagely slashed \$147 million from the operating budgets of the 26 Alberta universities, colleges, and technical institutes in March 2013. This caused staff cuts, program cuts, and general degradation of education quality. Hancock also led the recent government attacks on workers’ pensions, wages, and freedom of speech. It would appear that all this anti-social activity is somehow “consistent with the mandate of AU” and constitutes “ensuring a high quality education system.”

Giving Hancock an honorary degree is a major shift from previous AU practice. In former years, such degrees have usually been given to those who have actually contributed to building the society rather than helping wreck it. Past recipients include: jazz performer Clarence “Big” Miller; painter Sylvain Voyer; science journalist Bob McDonald; human rights activist Dr. Nyameko Barney Pityana; archaeologist John Brink; Tahitan-Tlingit artist Bob Dempsey; and trade union organizer Neil Reimer. Perhaps the “new” thinking is that if AU is nice to a former Tory politician, no matter what his track record, the ruling Tory party will be nice to AU.

Offering Hancock an honorary degree is not only a slap in the face to the people of Alberta in general; it is specifically a slap in the face to all the students who have paid tens of thousands of dollars in rising tuition fees and spent years earning their degrees rather than simply becoming a member of the political party that has ruled Alberta for 43 years to serve the interests of the oil companies. Considering that (1) AU is in financial trouble with a stated debt of \$10 million, and (b) Tory premier Jim Prentice is threatening more massive cuts to education and other



social services once again, the award to Hancock really looks like nothing more than a cheap fundraising gimmick. AU should be standing up to the Tory government's anti-education policies, not kneeling before them.

There may be others who carry out anti-social activity who feel slighted by being cast aside in the honorary degree stakes in favour of soon-to-be Dr. Dave. Should they wish to get back in the running, there are several places where they can buy a degree without completing a single course, essentially conferring an honorary doctorate on themselves. The University of Berkley (not to be confused with the University of California, Berkeley) is one online institution that offers honorary doctorates "to a select group of highly accomplished individuals such as yourself". For a minimum fee of US\$2,000 and a "brief autobiographical sketch", anyone can pick their own academic title, receive it in the mail, and then proudly parade their non-accomplishments before the entire world.

Further Gouging Students to Fund Post-Secondary Education?

By Dougal MacDonald, Co-Chair CUPE 3911

The new president of Athabasca University, Peter MacKinnon, has just published a book on post-secondary education entitled *University Leadership and Public Policy in the Twenty-First Century: A President's Perspective*. As his views will likely play a part in the future of AU, *The Outsider* will review various chapters of the book in coming issues. This issue focuses on Chapter 3, which has the folksy title, "White Coats Make an Office Call" followed by the subtitle, "On Tuition and Financial Assistance for Students."

MacKinnon's overall thesis in Chapter Three is that tuition fees and increases have no major effect on accessibility, and that students should pay a "larger share" of the social investment in their education. One of the main problems he sees in this regard is that provincial governments have too much control over tuition fees and that more (or all) control should be shifted to university administrations which will then raise fees at will. Not surprisingly, it was during MacKinnon's reign as president of University of Saskatchewan that USask tuition fees were raised a record 15 per cent. Students in the pharmacy and nutrition programs had their fees raised by 28 per cent and 40 per cent respectively (note 1).

The assertion that tuition fee raises have no effect on accessibility is hardly worth arguing against. It is well-known that students from lower socio-economic backgrounds have more



difficulty attending post-secondary education. For example the U.S. Department of Education longitudinal study from 1988-2000 showed conclusively that low socio-economic status hinders post-secondary attendance for even the highest attaining students (note 2). It is also well-known that the average student debt in Canada after completing post-secondary education is about \$25,000 and that paying off such a debt requires gaining well-paid employment for a long period of time after graduation.

What is also clear is that the neo-liberal agenda for post-secondary education includes a revised approach to how post-secondary education is financed. In the past it was accepted by all that funding post-secondary education was a major social responsibility of government. While Alberta governments have underfunded PSE for decades, especially through the savage budget cuts of March 2013, at least some budgetary contribution has been made over the years. One of the main sources of revenue for funding education in Alberta has been non-renewable resource revenue, primarily from the mainly foreign-owned oil and gas companies.

Now Premier Prentice and others are singing a new song. This is that resource revenues are “too volatile” to fund education so other sources need to be tapped. These new sources include higher student tuition and other fees; commercialization of research; private donations with strings attached; leasing of university-owned lands; etc. In other words, this means further gouging students as well as tapping into anything but the huge profits that the energy companies have made over the decades. According to *The Globe and Mail*, in the last ten years only nine of the major energy companies in Alberta, e.g., Syncrude, SunCor, etc., accumulated total profits of \$140 billion, all of which went into the pockets of the mainly private owners. The expropriated \$140 billion would have funded a lot of education at all levels, not to mention health care, other social programs, etc.

Because succeeding governments have ruled on behalf of the energy companies and have made and kept Alberta’s economy dangerously dependent on the export of raw resources, increased funding for education, which benefits everyone, must come mainly from the revenues of the energy companies. Can this be done? Yes, there are examples all over the world of countries which currently offer free post-secondary education and fund it from the productive sectors of the economy: Algeria, Argentina, Austria, Barbados, Brazil, Chile, Cuba, Denmark, Ecuador, Egypt, France, Germany, Greece, India, Iran, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Kuwait, Malta, Morocco, Nepal, Norway, Pakistan, Peru, Poland, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Spain, Sweden, Venezuela, and many more. Many of those countries also offer free education to their own students studying abroad as well as free education to international students who come to those countries to study.



In light of the fact that post-secondary education definitely CAN be funded by resource revenues in Alberta, here is a recommended seven-point program regarding the eventual elimination of all university tuition and other fees:

- The right to education from the primary to post-secondary level be given a constitutional guarantee and enshrined in provincial (and federal) legislation
- Major investments in education
- An immediate freeze on tuition fees and their progressive reduction and eventual elimination
- Businesses and institutions which currently receive educated and trained personal free of cost be required to pay a levy to finance post-secondary education
- Progressive transformation of loans into a national bursaries program to ensure each student has a right to a livelihood
- Abolition of user fees
- A cap on fees and reduction of tuition for international students.

(Note 1: See https://www.cautbulletin.ca/en_article.asp?ArticleID=1760)

(Note 2: See http://www.epi.org/publication/webfeatures_snapshots_20051012/)

Post-Secondary Education is the Answer in Alberta

Is Post-Secondary Education affordable? The cost has risen dramatically to an increase of 267% since 1991 according to Stats Canada (CAUT Almanac – 3.3) This means that it is increasingly difficult for Canadians to attend post-secondary institutions, and even more so for Albertans. Currently Alberta has the lowest PSE participation rate in Canada: 18% for young Albertans compared to 24% in the rest of Canada. Aboriginal, rural and low-income students (often new immigrants and underemployed learners) are more seriously affected than their middle or upper class counterparts in Alberta.

Albertans are really upset at the huge cuts to PSE operating grants. Over 2/3 of Albertans in a recent survey argued that the Alberta government should increase its investment in higher education to build the Alberta economy. Alberta cannot afford to turn away qualified applicants due to underfunded post-secondary programs. An educated labour force contributes to a healthy economy. <http://pialberta.org/content/post-secondary-education-answer-resources>



Contract Faculty at York on Strike for Better Wages, Job Security

By Dougal MacDonald, Co-Chair CUPE 3911

CUPE 3903 in Toronto, at York University, reports that the contract faculty, teaching assistants, graduate assistants, and research assistants that it represents, are on strike at York University after union members voted against sending the university's final offer to a ratification vote. Union leadership had recommended rejecting the offer, stating that it did not provide adequate wage increases or job security.

"We have directed our bargaining team to go back to the table ... I am confident that this is going to be wrapped up ... The university knows we're not that far apart," said CUPE 3903 Chair Faiz Ahmed.

For the first day of the strike on Monday March 2, CUPE 3903 asked all its members and their allies to attend a rally and mass picket on York Boulevard (the main entrance to Keele campus from Keele Street) from 11:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. York University has suspended all classes, exams, and academic activities, with limited exceptions; libraries, residences, computer labs, cafeterias, and athletic facilities will remain open.

In a statement, YorkU President Mamdouh Shoukri said, "the compensation and other collective agreement improvements we are offering are highly competitive with, if not better than, recent settlements elsewhere." He added that "we value our relationship with CUPE 3903. I am confident that, when we return to the bargaining table, we will reach a fair and competitive settlement." Teaching assistants at the University of Toronto are also on strike.

Note that in Alberta, members of CUPE 3911, AUFA, and AUPE 069 all fall under jurisdiction of the Public Service Employee Relations Act (PSERA), brought in by former Premier Peter Lougheed in 1977. PSERA makes strikes to resolve collective bargaining issues illegal and instead imposes compulsory interest arbitration which is a 2-step process. First it is determined what of the outstanding issues is arbitrable as there are many exclusions under that act and then an actual hearing is held on the merits. Historical analysis shows that arbitration decisions in the past have overwhelmingly favoured the employer.

(For more information on the York Strike go to the CUPE 3903 website, <http://3903.cupe.ca/>)

(A copy of Alberta's PSERA may be found at <http://www.qp.alberta.ca/documents/Acts/P43.pdf>)



“Our Working Conditions are Students’ Learning Conditions”

CUPE 3902 University of Toronto TAs and Sessionals are on strike. They do 60% of the teaching for a very low 3.5% of the U of T’s budget. They are paid 30% below Toronto’s living wage. And many do not have guaranteed funding.

A shift on the U of T picket line is described by TA Mercedes Sharpe Zayas: “We handed out flyers to cars as they came on campus. We marched around the legislature and rallied with York sisters and brothers. We then marched to OISE and everyone in the march felt confident and energized! There were drums and face paint, and we were learning and singing new songs. We went to a baby rally. Parent TAs had their children with them, to show the public that not all educational workers are pampered youth; many have children. Media has been negatively focusing on what appears to be a high hourly wage but our funding package is limited and does not take into account inflation and housing costs. There are very limited appointments; TAs are required to do mandatory hours to pay off their tuition. Very few in my planning program have guaranteed funding packages.”

The effects of poor wages are far reaching in terms of who will be making decisions in our society in the future. A fellow student of Mercedes’ is very concerned about the graduate student-funding package that has been frozen at \$15K per year since 2008. Coupled with this is the lack of guaranteed funding for students in professional programs such as the MSc in Professional Planning. This student feels that U of T is locking out the poor from professional studies. The campus is not addressing the issue of diversity, leaving these kinds of programs open to only middle to upper class, primarily white students who are there because their families can afford it. Planning programs require a diversity of students, including those without privilege to ensure that as future workers, they will be making fair and equitable decisions in the planning of urban and public spaces. If the funding is not available to attract these students, will our future planners have the capability or will to create a city that is inclusive of all members of society?

CUPE 3902 is very active in these hard times. Check out the U of T Chief Negotiator’s Open Letter to the VP and Provost at cupe3902.org. “We know each other. We have sat across the table from each other in previous rounds of bargaining, and we’ve worked in collaborative ways on task forces and working groups.” “I’m asking you the following questions in an open letter because your Bargaining Team is not meeting with ours, and because when hundreds of freezing student-workers came to your office yesterday, and again today, requesting to hear from you, you refused to come out.” Hear the story of CUPE 3902’s struggle on YouTube



weareuoft.ca “The University works because we do. We are the ones that help students learn. We are the ones that bridge the gap between teaching and understanding.”