

Rm. 136 St. John's College
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February 2007



Local **3909**

Proudly Representing
Teaching Assistants,
Grader Markers,
Tutors, Librarians,
Student and
Sessional Instructors
at the University of Manitoba

Dorothy Wigmore
President

Jason Bland
VP, Unit 1 (TA)

Suzanne Grierson
VP, Unit 2 (Sessional)

Lynne Fernandez
VP, Social Policy

Roman Yereniuk
Treasurer

Darryl Draeger
Secretary

TBA
Office Coordinator

TBA
Executive Assistant

Bill Sumerlus
CUPE National Staff Rep.

Howard Curle
Staff Benefits Rep.

Dorothy Wigmore
Health and Safety Rep.

A HIGHER GRADE

Newsletter of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, Local 3009

"UNION SOLIDARITY IS BASED ON THE PRINCIPLE THAT UNION MEMBERS ARE EQUAL AND DESERVE MUTUAL RESPECT AT ALL LEVELS." - EQUALITY STATEMENT CUPE CONSTITUTION

ACADEMIC AMNESTY

WHEREAS the Senate acknowledges the usefulness of a strong student effort to increase financial support for post-secondary education;

AND WHEREAS the University of Manitoba Students' Union have planned activities for the week of February 7, 2007 to raise public awareness about the role of post-secondary education and to pressure governments to reinvest in affordable, high-quality education;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT February 7th, 2007 be a day of student protest, and that all academic staff shall be made aware of this fact; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT where reasonable, members of the academic staff be asked not to set exams, assignments or other academic requirements used for grading purposes on February 7th, 2007; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT students are expected to fulfill all their academic responsibilities regardless of their participation on February 7th, 2007, and that these responsibilities are to be deferred, not canceled; and that students and instructors be encouraged to make alternate arrangements for any conflicts in advance of February 7th, 2007; and that students inform their instructor(s) prior to February 7th, 2007.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Senate endorse activities to increase awareness of the need for the Federal and Provincial governments to reinvest in affordable, high-quality education at the post-secondary level, and that all members of the university community be encouraged to participate in these events

SHOW YOUR SUPPORT AT THE CFS NATIONAL DAY OF ACTION
Wednesday, February 7th

1. MEET AT THE ADMINISTRATION BUILDING AT NOON
2. FREE BUSES TO THE RALLY AT THE LEGISLATURE
3. BE BACK ON CAMPUS BY 3:30 PM

PRESIDENT REPORT

It is a privilege to be a local union president. However, it is not an easy job, especially in a local such as ours. The biggest difficulty is that all our members are contingent workers. In addition to our collective agreements, we have individual contracts that must be renewed on an ongoing basis.

The consequences for our union is serious. Often, we do not know who is a member of the local. Our members come and go. We may have a job one year or semester and not the next. Because of our varied hours of work, it is hard to find that perfect time for union activities. It is hard to get information about the best way to reach you, especially by e-mail. This adds up to real difficulties for your executive to information to you in a timely and aggregate manner.

It is also difficult as most executive members change each year and staff changes complicate the situation. We find ourselves trying to learn what others have figured out. Our institutional memory is almost nonexistent and the experience of running a local is limited. Like most of the executive, I have spent time learning how to do this job. It is sometimes fun, often time-consuming, and always a learning situation.

In early June, your executive held a planning session and decided on four goals for the coming year:

- increase membership appreciation of, and involvement in, the local union
- expand use and understanding of the local 3909 collective agreements
- improve workplace conditions for union members
- expand executive committee capacity

Although we have not had the capacity to do as much as we hoped, we keep these goals in mind as we make decisions about the local's business. We have all learned a lot, effectively increasing our capacity.

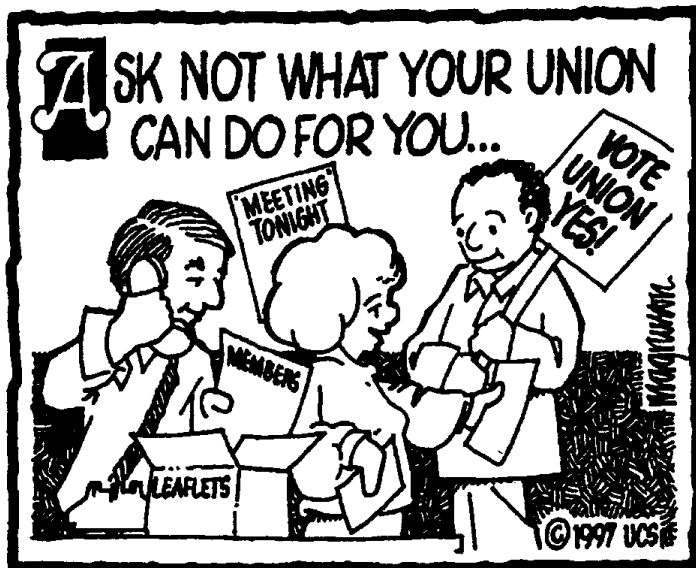
Almost all of us are new to local union work. We were without a Secretary for about a month. The treasurer has just left us with greener pastures in San Jose. A very involved trustee resigned in December. We have also had to deal with staff turnover, computer and website problems, and difficult personal situations for several individuals. However, we have plowed ahead despite the difficulties.

Your executive is starting to organize for bargaining a new contract for the TAs, grader/markers, and others in unit 1. We are about to start working on the wage re-opener for unit 2 sessionals and librarians. One plan is to hold building meetings to reach out to members. Someone is helping to sort out most of the website problems. The local has filed and followed through with grievances and is dealing with evaluation and intimidation/bullying issues. We cannot do everything on our own.

We still need other members to:

- ⇒ Be building representatives (or stewards)
- ⇒ Put up posters and/or distributed other union information
- ⇒ Hold building meetings to discuss members' concerns and questions
- ⇒ Be alternates for the university's health and safety committee
- ⇒ Sit on the university benefits committee
- ⇒ Maintain our web site and help solve problems with our computer
- ⇒ Let us know about problems or situations that are out there, not being dealt with, etc. within your departments or schools that affect our members

If you are interested, please contact the office at 474-8804 or cupe3909@mts.net.



VOLUNTEER!

We are still trying to make and improve connections with other unions on campus. We support the national day of the action sponsored by the Canadian Federation of Students and are working with the GSA and UMSU about this and other issues. Nationally, CUPE held a very important strategy meeting for university workers in Montreal last October. Aside from networking with other CUPE members with similar jobs, topics included privatization and corporate influence in universities, challenges for coordinated bargaining, and organizing issues.

The executive are members of the local who happen to be in the official leadership positions. The "union" is all of us. So, think of the union when you have questions about your job as a TA, grader/marker, sessional or librarian. Your union will work with and for you. We will organize so that the administration knows we can not be intimidated and that we will stick up for our rights. The more of us doing that, the stronger we will be.

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Dorothy Wigmore

VICE-PRESIDENT (UNIT 1–TAS/MARKERS) REPORT

Since our fall membership meeting, your executive has been very busy. After developing a strategic plan, it was time to start putting that plan into action. Unfortunately, we experienced a continuous flux of Executive Board and staff resignations as our members continue to move onto to other things. I feel this exemplifies the unique transitional nature of our workforce but it also drives home the point that we need a constant influx of fresh new people to ensure effective governance.

During the fall and early winter months, your Executive held several meetings. Additional agenda items included the formation of hiring committees to replace staff and canvassing the local for a new Secretary and Treasurer. No new grievances have been filed by members of Unit I during the fall of 2006. We are still awaiting status of the policy grievance filed earlier last year.

Some initiatives include coordinating 'brown-bag' lunch meetings for department members in Unit I and contacting prospective local activists. Rick, Dorothy and I met with University payroll to address the lack of information being sent to the local with our monthly dues. We have since been assured that the payroll department will once again honour our collective agreements with regard to membership information. The problem began in June 2005 when the University changed over to its new payroll system and, unfortunately, the problem had been left unchecked for several months but it now appears to have been corrected.

This year is a bargaining year for Unit I. It is imperative that the local begin organizing and planning for negotiations with the University as soon as possible. The first stage in a successful negotiation will be a strong and clear message from our members in the form of a bargaining survey. Typically, 10-20% of our members fill out the survey. It would be ideal if our Unit can improve on this statistic. We would like to have the survey available in February so that we can begin processing the results during March.

We need to take action now! Bargaining proposals, based on the results of the survey, need to be prepared for June. If we enter negotiations with a clear and strong message based on significant quantitative survey results, we can set the stage for a successful negotiation later in the calendar year. To make this happen, we need volunteers to help with contacting members and encouraging them to complete the survey. We need people to knock on doors and agitate the membership! I ask you to join me in reforming the Action committee for this purpose.

Jason Bland

