

Association of Nova Scotia University Teachers

ANSUT/APUNE

Association des professeurs des universités de la Nouvelle-Écosse

April 2011

Living in Interesting Times

By Chris Ferns, ANSUT President

The past year has been an eventful one for Nova Scotia's universities. Unfortunately, when used in the context of post-secondary education in the province, "eventful" tends to bear the same ominous connotations as "interesting" does in the famous Chinese curse, "May you live in interesting times".

And yet, it all began so well . . .

When an NDP government was elected in June, 2009, there was every reason to feel optimistic about the future of post-secondary education. After all, even the outgoing Tory government had belatedly acknowledged its importance by signing an MOU with the province's universities that made a significant reinvestment in the system. At the same time, a freeze on tuition fees had resulted in Nova Scotia's fees no longer being the highest in the country — a dubious distinction they had held for well over two decades. If even a Tory government had made such a commitment, then surely an NDP government would seize the opportunity to build on this achievement.

Or at least, that is what many of us hoped. After all, this was a party whose leader had repeatedly stressed the importance of affordable education, while in meetings with NDP Education critics and caucus members

over the years, ANSUT representatives had repeatedly been assured that the party understood the importance of investing in post-secondary education, rather than seeing it merely as a cost to be contained.

The first signs were promising. In early January, 2010, the government launched — with considerable fanfare — a campaign to promote Nova Scotia as "Canada's University Capital". Here at last, it seemed, was a government that recognized the crucial importance of the province's universities. Even the news, later the same month, that the Premier had commissioned Dr. Tim O'Neill to conduct a review of the university system seemed no great cause for concern. True, choosing a former Bank of Montreal executive to undertake the task seemed rather odd — but then, he was also a former Saint Mary's Economics professor. There seemed every reason to suppose he would demonstrate an understanding of the system — perhaps even an appreciation of its virtues. After all, there had to be a reason why some 40% of Nova Scotia's student population came from outside the province.

In fact, the O'Neill Report turned out to be a barely mitigated disaster. Apart from advocating improved student assistance, and some sharing of administrative costs that might possibly save money, most of its proposals seemed as though they were designed to actually precipitate the potential crisis it claimed to be addressing.

Declining student enrolments were accepted as inevitable, while alternatives such as improved recruitment initiatives and increasing participation rates were summarily ruled out. Mergers and program closures were suggested, though with no evidence that these would save money. And last, and most scandalous, the Report recommended the deregulation of tuition fees, arguing (in the face of all the evidence to the contrary) that high tuition fee levels had no impact on access.

What is perhaps most disturbing, however, is that all of this clearly reflects the thinking of the government — or at any rate, its Premier, who commissioned the report. Because the report does not simply represent the views of some maverick bank executive; rather, it was prepared in close collaboration with the Premier's office. Prior to the release of the final document, a preliminary draft was presented to the Premier's office for feedback. And, given that this resulted in the original release date of June last year being pushed back to September, one can only conclude that the list of suggested revisions must have been rather extensive. This, in other words, was the document the government wanted.

So — the question we must ask is, just what *is* the government's agenda? What is its vision for post-secondary education in the province?

One theory is that it actually has none, and that commissioning the report was simply a cynical exercise in managing expectations. By floating unconscionable proposals — such as the deregulation of tuition fees — it might be hoped that the reaction to their being raised, but “only” by 3% a year, would be relief, rather than outrage. Likewise, raising the spectre of mergers and program closures might reconcile the university community to gritting their teeth and accepting a “mere” 4% reduction in public funding to the system.

In other words, seen from this perspective, the government's agenda is cost-cutting, pure and simple, without the slightest regard for its impact on the quality of education.

Because as we all know from the experience of the 1990s, the quality of education is the first thing to suffer when public funding is slashed. There will be fewer full-time faculty hired, greater reliance on poorly paid and under-resourced part-time contract workers, and increased class sizes. There are signs of moves in this direction on several campuses already. And while the government's proposals for improved student assistance are to be welcomed (even if not all of them are terribly efficiently directed), there appears to be no concern whatever over the likely impact of increased fees on the 40% of students who won't benefit from them because they are from out of province.

Yet others might argue that this viewpoint, however bleak, is actually rather sanguine when we consider the alternative. Because the O'Neill Report in fact makes no recommendations at all with regard to funding cuts; rather, it proposes a range of benchmarks which might be used to determine long term increases. In effect, the government's 4% cutback, in the face of the perennial under-funding of post-secondary education in Nova Scotia (of which they were stern critics while in opposition) goes beyond what the report recommends.

So what might be the intended effects of the government's funding policy? Already some universities are projecting serious deficits as a result, with some even questioning how long they can remain viable — particularly given that in the recent budget there was reference to the upcoming MOU implementing yet further progressive reductions. Perhaps the real agenda is to use the engine of economic necessity to drive some of the institutions

out of business, or to force mergers (even if they don't save money) without appearing "responsible", as the Savage government did when it mandated the merger of TUNS and Dalhousie, and the consolidation of Education programs. While the O'Neill Report recommended against the establishment of a University of Nova Scotia, it should be borne in mind that it only proposed that consideration of a University of Halifax be deferred for the next five years. Maybe that is what the Premier has in mind — even if it may well be the task of another government to pick up the pieces after three more years of funding cuts.

ANSUT, in co-operation with the Canadian Federation of Students and the Nova Scotia Government and General Employees Union, has commissioned its own study, challenging the assumptions of both the O'Neill Report and the thrust of government policy to date, and this is scheduled for release later this month. As well, one of the principal items on the agenda for our Annual General Meeting in May will be determining our strategy for the longer term struggle to come.

As for the campaign to make Nova Scotia "Canada's University Capital" — perhaps the best indication of where that stands was provided when representatives of ANSUT and the Dalhousie Faculty Association met with the Minister of Education late last year. When we asked her where things stood with the campaign, she said she didn't know. After some rather embarrassed consultation among Department of Education officials at the meeting, it was indicated that "some further event" was in the works — but the whole project appears to have been farmed out to some public relations firm, leaving the Minister responsible for post-secondary education in the dark.

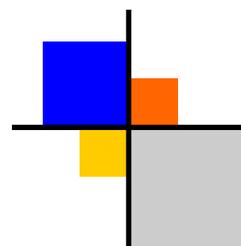
The year to come promises to be an eventful one.

Faculty Union of Nova Scotia College of Art and Design

By Alvin Comiter, President

FUNSCAD has two bargaining units. Unit I represents Faculty and Librarians, and the majority of our Unit I members are the Contract Academic Staff we call Regular Part-Timers (RPT's). Unit II represents our Technical, Library, and Gallery staff. For the first time in our history, both contracts will expire on the same date (June 30, 2011). Both Units have selected their bargaining teams and we are in the process of preparing for negotiations. To make things even more interesting, NSCAD's staff unit (NSGEU) will also be bargaining at the same time.

Like the rest of us, NSCAD will be in a dire financial situation if the government goes ahead with its plan to cut funding by 4% without making any adjustments to the funding formula. It's likely that NSCAD will face a \$3 million deficit in the 2011-12 fiscal year unless an agreement is negotiated that accurately reflects the high cost of a studio based education in the Visual Arts.



**Mount Saint Vincent University
Faculty Association**

By Linda L. Mann, President

The main priority of the MSVUFA this past year has been negotiations for a new collective agreement. We filed our intent to bargain March 10, 2010 and the team met many times over the summer and fall months. When we reached an impasse on November 8, 2010, we filed for conciliation and took a strike vote, with over 90% of the members voting in favour of strike action. A deal was finally reached on January 14, 2011, following two days of conciliation.

Retroactive to July 1, 2010, the agreement is for only two years – shorter than we have ever had before – and provides for a salary increase of 2% in each of the two years, adjustments to the salary grids and enhanced infrastructure for teaching and research. Factoring in increases to the grid steps, and a significant increase to the Assistant floor, the total salary increase is just over 5% over two years. While the bargaining climate was particularly challenging, with dual threats to funding and enrolments, the agreement has met the main priorities in the mandate provided by the membership.

Despite gains in enrolments and a relatively strong financial position in 2010, MSVU faced a threat to its survival from the O’Neill Report, which recommended our merger with one of the other Halifax campuses. This Report has been much maligned, but seems to have been used as an excuse for the NS government to cut funding to all universities by 4%, supposedly somewhat offset by allowing tuitions to increase by 3%.

The effects of these factors on budgets for the next few years is uncertain, but our membership remains firm in their view that post-secondary education is a key asset to the province and essential for the growth of the region. They also believe that a university needs to provide comparable faculty salaries, adequate faculty complement, and full program/course options for its students, and to sustain itself in a competitive environment.

With the short time frame and uncertain economic climate, bargaining strategy remains the top priority for the MSVUFA. We have a good start on a member communication network ([WordPress blog](#) and off-campus e-mail distribution list) and have urged members to keep their **RESPECT** pins handy – we may need them again soon!

Other priorities include member education about collective agreement and union issues; and maintaining connections with external unions and associations. Our Grievance Officer, Ken Dewar, held an information session with ‘newish’ members this past January to review articles related to RTP and to hear any concerns they may have as new members. Recent focus groups sessions with members of the MSVUFA identified a number of excellent suggestions to enhance internal and external relations. The Executive will soon discuss how these may be best implemented.

We would like to acknowledge the retirement this summer of two colleagues many ANSUT members will know. Denise Nevo has long been involved in union activities. She served as MSVUFA Treasurer and as CAUT Defence Fund Trustee for many years. Many of you may have met her as one of the CAUT Defence Fund flying pickets! Ken Dewar has served as President and Grievance Officer of the MSVUFA. He brought energy, commitment and a consultative communication style to these roles as well as to his service on Senate, Board of Governors and many university committees over his long and stellar career.

I will be going on sabbatical this Fall, and therefore passing on the MSVUFA President role to Michelle Forrest. Michelle served as our Grievance Officer in 2009-10 and will be a dedicated and wise leader. I am also very pleased with the new slate of Executive members – new and longer term members who represent a wide range of disciplines and perspectives. I am grateful for all the support I received from my Executives and from the membership over the past two years and hope to serve them again in some capacity in the future.

Saint Mary's University Faculty Union

By Jeff Power, President

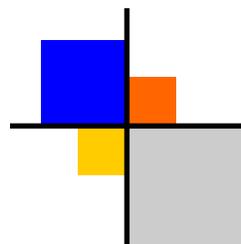
In terms of contract negotiations, this has been a quiet year for SMUFU. We signed a three year agreement in September 2009, which runs until August 31, 2012. Given the current labour environment, our settlement of approximately 2.9% in each of the three years now seems better than most. It is expected, however, that the negotiations in 2012 may not be as smooth and as a result we are already thinking about appropriate strategies.

As with all universities in the province, we have had to deal with a variety of issues, from post retirement contracts to health and safety problems associated with the constant construction of new or renovated buildings on campus. However, it is the current climate of fiscal restraint that is the most worrisome going forward. Despite having a \$3 million surplus in the fiscal year 2010-11, Saint Mary's has recently released a budget for 2011-12 that points to potentially significant negative effects for faculty. While next year's budget does not reduce the total number of full time faculty members, it also does not provide funding for any of the needed additional positions. Particularly troubling is the introduction of a significant reduction in the part-time and overload budget. These changes will only exacerbate the already existing problem of ever increasing class sizes. Another worrisome aspect to this year's budget is \$1 million for "**Transition costs** – reserve for HR adjustments to deliver ongoing payroll savings". While not fully explained, this likely means early retirement buyouts and other costs associated with the termination of faculty and staff who will not be replaced. Since our Collective Agreement requires approximately a year's notice to eliminate faculty positions,

I expect that this is an indication that there will be proposals to drop programs and/or positions. Any announcements over the summer or early fall will take effect in the 2012-13 academic year. Faced with both real, and imagined, fiscal challenges our new executive will no doubt have a difficult upcoming year.

The new SMUFU members of the executive for 2011-12 take on their roles in April. They consist of: Judy Haiven, President; Johanna Weststar, Vice-President; Diane Crocker, Secretary; Sally Wood, Treasurer; and Members-at-large Kate Kimery, Shripad Pendse, and Ron Russell. We wish them well in these challenging times.

For further information on other SMUFU activities please check out our website at www.smufu.org and look for updates or just click on the Newsletter tab for our most recent **Faculty Union News**.



Acadia University Faculty Union

By Anna Kieft, AUFA ANSUT Representative and Member-at-Large

The 13th Collective Agreement between AUFA and the Acadia Board of Governors was signed on August 12, 2010. Negotiations between the Acadia University Faculty Association (AUFA) and the Acadia Board of Governors (BoG) began on May 3rd, 2010, and the negotiating teams came to an Agreement through regular negotiation meetings followed by a conciliation process. The agreement will be in effect until June 30, 2014. An outline of negotiation outcomes was given through a report to ANSUT by AUFA at the September 2010 ANSUT meeting. (The details of the settlement were provided in the revised minutes of the September meeting that were circulated in March).

On August 26th, 2010, an MOA was signed between the BoG and AUFA on benefits for faculty over 65. The agreement was reached through an arbitration process. The benefits agreed to were related to Basic Life Insurance (coverage extended to age 76, continuing on a 10% declining scale from 66-76), Optional Life Insurance (extra band added for ages 65-70), Long Term Disability Insurance (coverage extended to age 70; from 65-70 employees in receipt of the LTD benefit receive it for a maximum of 2 years; six month qualifying period must be completed by age 70 so plan participants do not pay LTD premiums beyond age 69.5), All AUFA members remain eligible for the six months sick leave at full pay (provided by article 24 of the Collective Agreement), Blue Cross will be offered without prescription drugs at the active employee rate (prescription drug coverage and payment of the drug coverage premium will terminate at age 65, with the expectation that the employee would then apply for Pharmacare). In addition, Life, Optional Life and LTD will be reinstated to employees whose coverage was terminated due to age prior to the signing of the MOA. Extension of coverage of all of the above will apply to all eligible employees, not only members of AUFA.

Due to the inclusion of much stronger equity language and provisions in Article 3 of the 13th Collective Agreement, a joint Employment Equity Committee was formed. This committee's mandate has several facets: to develop a confidential Employment Equity Self-Identification Form which encourages potential candidates for positions at Acadia University to indicate whether they belong to one of the five (5) designated groups identified by the Employment Equity Act and Provincial Human Rights Legislation, to develop and conduct a workforce survey, to undertake an employment systems review of current policies and practices to determine whether they pose barriers to employment equity, and to develop an Employment Equity Plan. These various components are to be completed by specific times over the life of the 13th Collective Agreement. As one step in the process of improving equity culture on campus, several equity workshops were held during the winter 2011 semester. These workshops are mandatory for anyone who will sit on hiring/selection committees for all faculty positions (including part-time, full-time CLT, and full-time continuing and tenure-track positions) or on Departmental and Library Review Committees.

Other notable ongoing AUFA activities include: discussions related to the release of the O'Neill Report and subsequent government decisions regarding the funding formula and related matters, and their effects on our programs and operating budget; the pension at Acadia and how its solvency relates to past internal decisions and on government policies; work on updating and revising Acadia's Policy Against Harassment and Discrimination; efforts to establish fairness in hiring for per course appointments given the improved clauses in the new agreement; and efforts to assist AUFA members as they find themselves working in an institution without an equity officer.

APPBUSA
(Association des professeures et professeurs de l'Université Sainte-Anne)

**By Professor Susan Knutson,
Vice-President**

On October 1, 2010, APPBUSA and Université Sainte-Anne signed a new collective agreement covering the years from 2009 to 2012. A month later, in November, the union elected a new executive to replace the team that had worked extremely well and very hard to win that contract and to settle conflicts that have plagued our little university over the last few years. The incoming executive has the good fortune to be beginning its mandate during what appears to be a period of goodwill and renewal. We will also be the first to benefit from course release for union work, which is one of the gains of that collective agreement.

Professor Yalla Sangaré, the outgoing union VP, will remain active as president of the CAUT Francophone Affairs Committee. The recteur of Université Sainte-Anne, Monsieur André Roberge, and the Vice-rectrice à l'Enseignement et à la Recherche, Madame Christiane Rabier, are both leaving those positions at the end of June. Monsieur Allister Surette is the incoming president, and a search committee is seeking a new VP Academic. Joint administration-union committees are working on Pension issues and on a revision of the Harassment and Discrimination Policy. We are also participating in the CAUT-sponsored working group on campus violence.

Cape Breton University Faculty Association

By Chester Pyne, President

It has been two years since CBUFA contributed to the ANSUT Newsletter, so this article will cover both years. Our fourth Collective Agreement was signed in the autumn of 2009 after a short and intense round of bargaining. The Employer was anxious to get the negotiations completed. It is a four year contract ending on June 30th of 2013.

Our Association represents Professors, Librarians, Lab Instructors and Nursing Practice Educators. We saw improvements in the salary for all ranks, and the agreement brought us into line with the comparator group that the Association was using: St.FX, SMU, MSVU and Acadia. The Employer had previously objected to using this group.

The rank of Nursing Practice Educator was formally brought into the Collective Agreement. It also established the rank of Librarian IV for the first time.

There were language improvements to rank and tenure as well as stricter controls on administrators, Dean or above, coming into the bargaining unit. Past practice was that the Association would have representation on hiring committees for these administrators; the contract now requires such representation.

Faculty are still teaching a 3/3 load and a task force was established in the contract to negotiate implementation of the 3/2 load. Those talks have broken down because of the way labs are counted; it would see science and math faculty with 18 to 21 contact hours, not 15 as it would be in other disciplines.

St Francis Xavier University Association of University Teachers

By Peter S. McInnis, President

Dr. Michael Manson was honoured with CAUT's Dedicated Service Award on October 1 of 2010. Michael Manson served thirteen years as President of the Association and was both President and Chief Negotiator during the first round of bargaining and the strike of 2000. The Members were out in force to see Mike again.

The new AVP has spear headed the most recent version of the institution's Academic Plan. The plan involves consolidation of programs, but no academic shrinkage. The institution has advertised and will be filling several tenure track positions this year. The plan identifies prospective growth areas, and will target resources accordingly, should our fiscal position allow. It recognizes the realities of the local demographic and our increasing reliance on international students. International students now comprise 19% of the student population.

We have withdrawn our representation from JOHSC because of the administration's failure to respect the Labour Legislation's stipulation that those serving on the committee will not be subject to retribution when performing their responsibilities as outlined in the legislation. It has proven more effective to deal with Labour and Workforce Development directly, but OH&S has still proven to be a difficult issue.

The Association is involved in two personnel disputes: one is currently set down for arbitration, and the other is still at the grievance level.

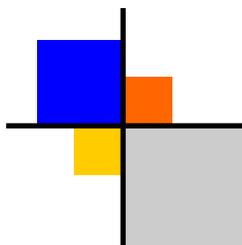
Currently, StFXAUT is actively participating in the university's budget for 2011-12. The result of provincial cutbacks in the wake of the O'Neill Report last Fall has resulted in a \$2.5 million shortfall at StFX. Despite the university's claims that it will endeavour to protect the academic 'envelope', the union has voiced serious concerns as to whether the anticipated cuts will be proportional across all of the envelopes.

To counter the administration line, the union formed the Financial Oversight Committee, comprised of experts from the faculties of business and mathematics/statistics, not only to look at the present budget, but also to analyze longitudinal changes and trends over the past decade. The results revealed that academic funding has been systematically reduced in comparison to other envelopes. This information has been conveyed to our members in a series of pdf newsletters known as 'The Beacon'. We are presently undergoing a re-design of our website and hope to have this completed shortly.

Problematic as well, is the notable increase in salary and 'performance bonuses' for senior and mid-level administrators. The number of administrators overall has increased over time to suggest StFX is over-administered, with dubious results for the institution. This budget will obviously have direct consequences for the StFXAUT in its coming round of collective bargaining, set for June 2012. We are mindful of the Employer's determined attempt to weaken our contract language covering financial exigency and program redundancy during the 2009-10 negotiations,

and would alert ANSUT members to be wary of similar attempts at their institutions.

We have continued to file FOIPOP requests for details on administrative costs, and the information has been startling, as StFX moves ever further towards the corporatized model of university structure. The StFXAUT has opened a fruitful dialogue with other campus unions, especially our NSGEU local that encompasses most line staff positions. This type of campus-wide strategy is effective in countering the lack of transparency with our administration and to ensure the message coming from the employer is consistent to all groups. Finally, we welcome our continued participation in ANSUT and the opportunity this offers to share our experiences with colleagues of other Nova Scotia universities



Atlantic School of Theology Faculty Association

By Alyda Faber, President

At a meeting on Wednesday, March 23, 2011, members of Atlantic School of Theology Faculty Association (ASTFA) voted to ratify the Tentative Agreement reached between the ASTFA and Employer bargaining teams late in the evening of March 21. Details of the settlement are as follows:

Librarian issues: ASTFA originally proposed librarian ranks I - IV, and finally settled for two ranks in this round of bargaining. While this was much less than was hoped for, professional librarians gained 10 days of professional development leave per year, when in the past they did not have any. This gain came with the caveat that if the Head Librarian asks a librarian to attend particular workshops related to her or his work, that these workshop days count as part of the 10 days research leave. We did not get a tabled paid 12-month leave for scholarly and professional development to be provided after 5 years of service. In terms of salary, librarians have made some gains, as \$2000 was added to the floor of librarian 1. Further progress is needed in this area, since librarians were 37% below the Nova Scotia university sector averages for academic librarians.

Salaries: ASTFA remains committed to achieving parity with Nova Scotia university sector averages for academic staff. Salaries for AST's faculty and professional librarians slipped further behind Nova Scotia university averages following the salary/seniority freeze imposed by the AST Board in 2009-10.

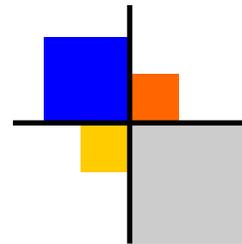
Our salaries are an average of 15% below NS university averages, As noted above, librarian salaries have improved. An important gain in the area of salaries is the automatic progression through the ranks.

Professional development funds remain frozen at \$2000 per year for faculty, and \$1000 for librarians. Faculty will be able to apply for research assistantship of \$1 000 per year. A fitness allowance of \$200 per year has been added, as well as a \$2000 stipend for the first iteration of an on-line course.

Surveillance: This issue dogged ASTFA throughout the 12 months of negotiations, as the Employer claimed the right to surveil faculty (and hence students, inescapably) in all areas of their work: electronic, office, classroom, elsewhere. The final day of bargaining, ASTFA agreed to an article that indicates that there will be no surveillance without notice, and that the Association is to be consulted on any use of surveillance should it be required for safety or other specific reasons, but even then any area under surveillance must have a notice posted to that effect.

Workload: The reduction of the faculty team from 11 to 8 persons several years ago, and the diversification of faculty responsibilities, has resulted in an overload of work in recent years. ASTFA presented a variety of ways to address this in the negotiations process, and achieved some significant gains on this matter.

The Employer will provide course relief to the Chief Negotiator in a bargaining year (one course) as well as one course to the Association President every year. The M.A. director has also gained course release (one per year). Faculty currently teach 5 courses each year.



**In Memoriam
Bernie Davis**

November 10, 1940 - January 23, 2011

It is with great sadness that we learned of the death of Bernie Davis, who passed away in January. Bernie served as ANSUT's first President from 1997-99, and also served a further term in 2005-06. He was a leading member of the small group of dedicated faculty members who set about rebuilding a provincial organization in the aftermath of the demise of ANSUT's predecessor, the Nova Scotia Confederation of University Faculty Associations (NSCUFA). The fact that we have a provincial organization today is due in large measure to the efforts of Bernie and his colleagues.

Bernie spend the bulk of his academic career at Saint Mary's, but also worked at Mount Saint Vincent, where he spent several years following the merger of Education departments in the 1990s. He will be remembered by his colleagues at both institutions as an admirable colleague, and a dedicated supporter of the union. Not many academics have "Solidarity Forever" sung at their funeral - but in Bernie's case it was a fitting tribute to his lifetime commitment to equality and justice. His passing is a great loss.

At March Council, members observed a minute's silence in Bernie's memory, and approved a donation to Nova Scotia's Heritage Trust, a cause to which he also devoted his customary energy.

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