

# CUASA COMMUNIQUÉ

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## **Reminder 1: Annual General Meeting, Friday, April 8, 2005**

All CUASA members are invited to attend this important meeting. The agenda and 2004 AGM minutes have been circulated. Please note that instead of an announcement of a president-elect the **two candidates standing for election -- Janice Scammell (Library) and Susanne Klausen (History) -- will speak and also answer questions.** We'll also have discussions on proposed changes to our Constitution & By-Laws; and other pressing matters.

## **Reminder 2: Deadline for submitting Professional Expense Reimbursement Forms is April 30.**

Any funds not expended will automatically carry forward provided that the sum does not exceed \$2,400. On May 1, another \$800 becomes available unless you have already reached the maximum allowable carry forward of \$2,400. Management has advised CUASA that a number of members have the maximum allowable funds and if they are not reduced, the \$800 applied on May 1 will be diverted to a Scholarship in accordance with Article 40.13 of the collective agreement. Forms are available from your department or unit administrator; guidelines and instructions are printed on the back of the form.

## **Flights of Rhetoric versus Hard Work in the Trenches**

It sometimes seems as if our world were being run by Pollyannas. To hear the politicians and administrators, everything is just about perfect, except for those pesky nay-sayers: the voters, the taxpayers, the professors, the students, the patients waiting for health care or immigrants wanting to united with their families. Several areas of concern to CUASA members illustrate the divergence between a sometimes fanciful rhetoric and the demanding struggles for real change.

## **Mandatory Retirement**

This should be a no-brainer, since every level of government makes pleasing noises about how discrimination is bad and how we are all committed to putting an end to discrimination, including discrimination based on age. But Ontario university administrations continue to insist that they should have the right to discriminate, with the laudable exception of the University of Toronto (see: <http://www.utfa.org/currentissues/1/>).

Deborah Gorham made a strong presentation on behalf of CUASA to the hearings on mandatory requirement last fall (posted at: <http://www.caut.ca/cuasa/> ). CUASA has also raised the issue at the Joint Committee to Administer the Agreement (JCAA), but Provost Harrison indicated that there was no interest on the part of senior administration in discussing the issue at Carleton. Perhaps they simply don't want faculty to know about exceptions being made to mandatory requirement when it benefits senior administrators. The day the University of Toronto decision was announced coincided with a JCAA meeting and we raised the matter again. The answer was unrevised, namely that, Carleton University is opposed to lifting mandatory retirement. In fact, their position at the government hearings was to ask for an exclusion. CUASA will continue to press vigorously for an end to age discrimination at Carleton.

## **The Rae Report**

Nothing helps muddle the decision-making process in Canada like a commission. The commissions make recommendations; then governments pick and choose which of the recommendations to implement. There are many positive things in the Rae Report (posted at: <http://www.caut.ca/cuasa/> ), but we need to be alert and ensure that what emerges from this process is more than higher costs to students and fewer resources for universities.

In close consultation with OCUFA through our delegate Mark Langer, CUASA will be supporting lobbying efforts to make sure that the Rae report becomes the first step out of Ontario's position at the bottom of the list for post-secondary funding. CUASA members will be asked shortly to take an active part in this lobbying.

We have also been making CUASA's position clear. Several members of the Steering Committee participated in the Rae Report process. Manfred Bienefeld, François Brouard and Thomas Kunz attended the round table meetings of the Rae Commission in the Fall and followed up with on-campus meetings as well as providing reports directly to OCUFA. Mark Langer has been working steadily with OCUFA as well as the Ottawa media. Fran Cherry and Edward Osei Kwadwo Prempeh attended the January 21 conference on Quality in Post-Secondary education, prior to the release of the Rae Report.

Manfred Bienefeld, CUASA's representative to the Board of Governors, has highlighted concerns about knee-jerk adulation of the Rae report, without due debate or discussion of how some recommendations would impose new burdens on students. His comments, which emerged from student challenges to President Van Loon's public pronouncements on the Rae report, follow. He and CUASA invite your participation in public discussion of the issues:

The recent "Rae Report" clearly marks an important moment for Ontario's universities and the government's response will undoubtedly shape our post-secondary system for years to come. More specifically, the government's financial response will determine whether we can begin to reverse the deplorable trend that has left Ontario, one of the country's richest provinces, with the lowest per capita public funding for post-secondary education. One can only assume that this is not a fact that is featured in the province's feel-good ads seeking to attract investment from the outside world.

The Rae Report is welcome and important in this context, because it calls for a substantial increase in public funding for our universities. And after many years of under funding, this has become a vitally important necessity if these institutions are to continue to maintain world class standards of teaching and research. In this sense, the Rae Report comes not a moment too soon.

However, we need to think very carefully before fully endorsing the report as a whole, since it is based on a vision that would increasingly reduce education to a commodity. A commodity to be purchased by individual's on the basis of private cost-benefit calculations. And there are many reasons why such a vision should be rejected.

The vision is comically undesirable, because it would systematically undermine the principle of merit, as the ability to attend university came to be ever more closely linked to the ability to pay, or to tolerate debt related risks.

It is politically undesirable because it is a recipe for allowing a wealthy elite to reproduce itself by using the university system to "buy" their children the degrees that will give them access to the best jobs under the veneer of meritocratic respectability.

And it is ethically reprehensible since it further dilutes and impoverishes the concept of citizenship. Moreover, this policy shift is a particularly reprehensible example of free riding, as generations that had once received their education as a public trust, pull up the draw-bridge behind themselves because they are not willing to pay the taxes that would allow future generations to enjoy the same privileges. Of course, if they really have come to believe that education should be treated as a private investment "in principle," then they should be invited to agree that it would be only fair to apply the principle retroactively, as well. Somehow one suspects that their enthusiasm would wane as a result.

In reflecting on these developments it is important to remember that the escalating burdens and risks associated with student debt are far more serious for students from poorer homes, not only because they cannot rely on help if things do not turn out well, but also because their chances of finding "good jobs" are significantly lower in any event. And that problem is more serious today because graduates are now entering a more difficult labour market in which jobs are more uncertain and contested.

The bottom line is that the graduates of the sixties entered a far more attractive labour market with little or no debt. And when they did so, they faced the challenge of finding a way of financing a mortgage in order to make a home in which to live and possibly to raise a family. In sharp contrast, today's graduates enter a more uncertain and difficult labour market, already carrying a "mortgage" in the form of their student debt, but without a home to live in. And then they have to buy their way into a property market in which relative prices have risen significantly over the years. This situation is untenable and unconscionable. And that problem needs to be recognised and addressed.

## **Centralized Scheduling**

Fran Cherry reports some progress and indicates further action needed:

As one might expect at a University, where the senior Administration is becoming increasingly removed from the academic staff, there is little new to report here. Centralized scheduling is in the works. Administrators are receiving training and Brian Mortimer is "consulting" !! At the last meeting of the JCAA, Provost Harrison acknowledged receipt of the questions in the last newsletter and guaranteed that there would be consultation with CUASA before the trial parallel run is implemented in the Fall. Since we have no idea what form "consultation with CUASA" will take, I suggest that you also work with your Chairs and Directors to register your concerns as directly as possible.

I have now spoken with several people at academic staff associations at Brock, Western, Queen's and Regina. In all of the conversations, I have been told that we would be better off without centralized scheduling if there is no joint time tabling committee to take any of our questions into account. The matter will be discussed again at our next JCAA meeting on April 26. CUASA intends to continue to press for a collaborative process in this matter.

## **Review of CUASA Workings**

Over the past year, with no negotiations to take up our attention, several CUASA Council members volunteered their time to review some of our internal workings at CUASA. Thomas Kunz headed a committee to examine our collective bargaining profile. Two committees headed by Edward Osei Kwadwo Prempeh and Fran Cherry looked at the committees that serve our membership, their composition and terms of reference. A lot of what we do at CUASA works well but we have some suggestions for improvement, which will be presented at the Annual General Meeting and then to the general membership for ratification.



## **Welcome Back**

Pat Finn, CUASA's Executive Director, has returned from her sabbatical at the University of Ghana.