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Academic Freedom: Locally and Globally

Academic freedom is something Canadian professors might take for granted, but it is a right of fairly recent origin. At Carleton the Collective Agreement clearly articulates the principle of academic freedom, as well as the responsibilities of faculty with respect to teaching and research.

But in many places in the world the right to research and to disseminate the results of research through teaching and publication is under threat or has not even been recognized.

Canada's tradition of academic freedom is exemplary, and Canadians have played a major role as advocates for academic freedom throughout the world. Not least, CUASA's Executive Director, Pat Finn, lent her expertise to the drafting of the landmark recommendation on academic freedom published ten years ago by UNESCO. On the anniversary of the Recommendation, we reprint the following article from the *CAUT Bulletin* to remind ourselves not to take our rights for granted, and to recognize Pat Finn's international stature in the area of academic labour organizing.

TEN YEARS OF UNESCO COMMITMENT TO ACADEMIC FREEDOM: CAUT IN THE LIMELIGHT

(With permission from the *CAUT Bulletin*)

Bill Bruneau

Canadian academics readily acknowledge their debt to European and American university traditions. But in 2007 the shoe is on the other foot. Canadian approaches to academic freedom, tenure, and collective bargaining are attracting attention, congratulation, and the thanks of colleagues around the world.

This past November 12-14, CAUT President Greg Allain attended a meeting of higher education teaching unions within Education International [EI] at Malaga, Spain. EI wanted to publicize and re-commit EI to a remarkable UNESCO statement—a statement for which CAUT can take direct responsibility.

CAUT president Greg Allain said afterward that “We in CAUT are committed to academic freedom. But now we're seen as authors of a crucial document in that field, the 1997 UNESCO Recommendation on the Status of Higher Education Teaching Personnel. The Recommendation has had demonstrable impact on world higher education. We're proud of our work on it.”

The UNESCO Recommendation committed member states in principle to academic freedom, to open and participatory university governance, and to conditions of work essential to academic freedom and tenure. In particular it defines academic freedom to include the right to engage in political activity as any other citizen and the right to be able to criticize one's own educational system and the university where one works.

As a Recommendation, the statement had (and has) persuasive and moral qualities—but not the force of law. It is not a Convention or a treaty.

Even though the document was not legally binding, the Recommendation was bothersome to several member states.

When word got around in the mid-1990s that Canada, and especially the CAUT, together with the International Labour Organisation were building a coalition for academic freedom, the governments of Nigeria (then a dictatorship) and Saudi Arabia were displeased. But so were nations whose cultural histories did not recognize or understand academic freedom. Thatcherite governments (the UK's included) were unhappy. It required years of meeting and writing to overcome resistance in UNESCO.

By the mid-nineties CAUT had been working for more than ten years with like-minded faculty associations in a loose federation of national faculty associations from around the world to promote academic freedom, and to defend the interests of faculty in the age of managerialism. Working with these associations (CAUT included), Pat Finn of the Carleton University Academic Staff Association agreed to develop a detailed proposal for a possible joint UNESCO/ILO declaration.

In 1994 the Canadian Commission for UNESCO, with the support of the CAUT Executive, seconded Don Savage, then Executive Secretary of CAUT, to UNESCO headquarters to draft a final proposal. The proposal went through several iterations and, despite the disapproval of a number of authoritarian and right-wing governments, was eventually adopted by the member states of UNESCO at the General Conference in 1997. The proposal included a requirement for UNESCO and the ILO to work together to implement the policy. This is now being done by a joint committee of the two organizations that commissions research on ongoing problems and hears complaints.

Ten years on, the Recommendation is in use across Canada and around the world. In a lengthening list of Canadian labour arbitrations, the Recommendation has played a highly visible and practical role in our defence of academic freedom.

In Australia and the UK, the Recommendation has helped in fighting managerial madness. In last month's EI meeting, for instance, there was renewed and vigorous opposition to ever-increasing reliance on casual and sessional work in universities and colleges in Australia, the UK, the United States, and (alas) in Canada. The Recommendation provided solid argument in the cause of fair and decent working conditions for academic staff.

In cases where academics find they can no longer freely teach and inquire, or where their work leads to prison or death—the Recommendation is an unambiguous reminder just how wrong, and how immoral are those practices and conditions.

The climactic UNESCO meeting of 1997 ended with success.

Canada and the CAUT are in the limelight, and they deserve to be there.

Electronic Pay Cheque Stubs

From: Carolina Willsher, Director, Human Resources

Electronic Direct Deposit Advice

The University currently distributes a hard copy of the Direct Deposit Advice (pay stub) to each employee twice monthly. Effective January 2008, the University will be moving to electronic distribution of Direct Deposit Advice forms. These Direct Deposit Advice forms are currently available on line and can be accessed through Employee Services Module on Carleton Central. See below for information about how to access Carleton Central.

Employees will now be able to view the electronic Direct Deposit Advice the day before payday, and view copies of the Direct Deposit Advice forms for the current and previous calendar years. Since individual payroll information is available only to the individual employee through Carleton Central, payroll, and other personal information will be more secure. There will be no risk of the hard copy form being misplaced or misrouted.

Those for whom it would be a hardship to use the electronic format should contact Human Resources to retain their current paper format.

Professional Expense Reimbursement

Although only one claim may be made each year for a Professional Expense Reimbursement, such a claim can be made any time before the current fiscal year. For information and forms, see the CUASA benefits page at:

<http://www.caut.ca/cuasa/benefits.html>

Sabbatical Storage

Because of the continuing shortage of space on campus, some units do ask their members to relinquish their office space while they are away from campus during a sabbatical. The problem then is where books and equipment can be safely stored. As a result of consultations between CUASA and the employer, Feridun Hamdullahpur, Vice-President (Academic), has offered to provide storage in those cases where faculty members have to give up their offices while on sabbatical. CUASA members who need such storage space should apply in a timely fashion to the Office of the Vice-President (Academic), with supporting documentation from their unit. For members with a disability that precludes them from packing up their office for storage, assistance will be provided by application to the Office of the Vice-President (Academic).