

APRIL 1996, VOLUME 22.6, Robert H. Johnston, Editor

Referendum regarding the

Funding of MUFA

MUFA Executive has endorsed an extremely important proposal which is now being submitted to all CP/M faculty, whether members of MUFA or not. It concerns the more equitable funding of MUFA activities. Briefly, the circumstances are these:

MUFA bargains on behalf of ALL faculty on the CP/M Scheme in matters affecting salary, benefits and pension. In addition, MUFA is frequently involved in matters of tenure and promotion appeals, and in all University policies and regulations which concern faculty. These are increasingly expensive responsibilities, often involving the need to consult (and pay) professional experts for technical advice. And yet, though ALL faculty members benefit, the cost is borne by only a portion. 475 MUFA members on CP/M contribute through their dues to supporting the Association's activities, while 280 faculty members also on CP/M have, for various reasons, declined to join MUFA. Many MUFA members have expressed resentment at the fact that, while their dues finance activities which benefit all, approximately a third of their colleagues get a free ride. This referendum seeks to remedy this situation by laying down that all faculty on the CP/M Scheme shall pay an amount equal to the membership dues in MUFA as a condition of employment at McMaster, though in cases where an individual objects to being a MUFA member, an equivalent amount shall be contributed to a recipient or recipients agreed upon from time to time by the Joint Committee.

The 755 faculty members on the CP/M Scheme will have received ballots containing the text of the referendum proposal. MUFA Executive strongly urges members to vote **YES and to return their ballots by May 1!** Since it is very likely that responding non-members will vote strongly NO, a good response by members is IMPERATIVE. This is all the more necessary on this occasion as MUFA members' recent record in returning ballots has been poor, an average of 38% in the last four mail ballots. So please, take a moment from your exam grading, mark your ballot, and return it promptly. If approval is won and that is by no means certain it will spread the burden of financial support of MUFA activities more fairly among all who benefit from them. You will be hearing this same message in somewhat greater detail from Henry Jacek, our outgoing President. The issue is important: so too is your response. **SURELY IT IS NOT IMPOSSIBLE TO RAISE OUR BALLOT RETURN RATE TO OVER 50% ON A QUESTION OF THIS IMPORTANCE WHICH CONCERNS US ALL?**

Bob Johnston
Department of History

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

We publish below a letter from Frances Willey whose husband, Tom, was a member of the Department of History for 25 years. The letter raises issues which will be of interest and importance to many members. p ed.

My husband, Thomas E. Willey, a member of the Department of History, passed away on 18th February last, after a 22-month long battle with cancer. I notified the University of his passing the next day. A week later (26th Feb.), I received a letter from the University regarding Tom's insurance and pension benefits.

There was one paragraph in that letter that greatly disturbed me. It stated: 'your family's Major Medical and Dental coverage will cease at the end of February', an announcement which gave me barely three days' notice. I was so concerned about this that I phoned several faculty members for their advice. A few days later I received a phone call from the University telling me that my benefits had been extended for another month, until 31st March.

At that point, I asked if there was any other option open to me beyond that cut-off point and was told to get in touch with another insurer and enquire about their rates and conditions. This I did, and learned, to my consternation, that the alternative insurance would be very costly, about \$1200.00 a year, that is, if one even qualified for it. There happened to be a good many conditions attached.

Then, just a few days ago, I again heard from the University and this time was informed that my benefits would be further extended to 30th June. While I am happy to have coverage for several more months, I still have a major concern. Why does a retiree and his family retain all these benefits but the surviving spouse of a deceased faculty member is in danger of losing them after a very limited period? Surely Tom is not the only faculty member who has died before retirement age.

Given my experience, there seems to be something wrong with the system, and I urge faculty members to ask this question. If the University is a warm and caring institution, as we have been told, why does it have two sets of rules: one for faculty members who retire and another for faculty members who die in harness? My hope is that this question will be addressed and resolved in such a way as to ensure that I and others similarly affected will continue to receive medical and dental benefits.

Another concern that I have is about Tom's pension. I was presented with three options:

1. A cash refund (subject to taxation at source).
2. Transferring the funds to an RRSP.
3. A monthly pension payable for my lifetime only.

At first, the third option seemed the most appealing until I realized that if I died tomorrow payments would stop since there is no provision for assigning the unpaid portion to beneficiaries. Rather, my understanding is that that portion would revert to the pension fund. Clearly then, the first two options are the only ones worth considering unless, of course, the rule is altered with respect to beneficiaries. In any case, all this should be made clear to would-be retirees.

I appreciate this opportunity to make my concerns known.

Frances Willey

This Newsletter is published monthly between September and May by the Faculty Association at McMaster University. The Association's Executive for 1995/96 is composed of the following members:

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Anyone wishing to contribute to this Newsletter is invited to send submissions to the Faculty Association Office (HH-103A, e-mail: mufa@mcmaster.ca, ext. 24682). Deadlines are the 15th of each month. All submissions

will be published at the discretion of the Editor.

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You Asked...

Are those faculty who are taking advantage of the early retirement package entitled under provincial law to a month's salary in lieu of their month of vacation time?

You are entitled to one month's vacation for the year, July 1, 1995 to June 30, 1996. If you are prevented from taking this by your normal University duties, then you might have a case for holiday pay (in lieu of holidays). But otherwise there is no case here.

Ballot Results

We hereby confirm the ballots to the question "I hereby approve the Agreement reached in the Joint Administration/Faculty Association Committee on Faculty Remuneration for 1996/97" as follows:

YES	172
NO	32
SPOILED	0
TOTAL BALLOTS	204

Yours very truly

HOECHT & ASSOCIATES

Richard A. Hoecht, C.A.

REFERENDUM

re funding of

MUFA

Don't forget to return your

BALLOTS

by 4:30 p.m.

Wednesday, May 1, 1996

to

Hamilton Hall 103A