

NEWSLETTER

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

(Delivered at General Meeting on January 18, 1999)

I apologise for the fact there is no written document. Let me make some comments under three general headings, first on work that is completed, second, on work that is on-going and finally, on relations with other associations.

Work concluded this past year, since the last Annual General Meeting, and in which the Executive and the Joint Committee have been involved, includes the Employment Accommodation Policy for McMaster employees which was approved by Senate and the Board, and the Intellectual Property Policy, also approved by the Senate and Board and under which an Intellectual Property Board that includes five faculty members appointed by the President of the University in consultation with the President of the Association, has been put in place. Finally, this year all of the various revisions to the Tenure and Promotion Policy that extend back several years went to the Senate and Board for approval; barely a question was raised about any of them. The major revisions having to do with suspension, removal of faculty and a reduced workload arrangement for tenure-track faculty, plus other minor changes are now in place and there exists a "1998 yellow document". You will recall that MUFA now represents the librarians and there is a Library Negotiations Committee. This year saw a Policy on Librarian Classification and a Grievance Policy for Librarians finally approved by the Provost. His method of approval did not sit too well with some of our colleagues, but those policies are in place.

In terms of on-going work, the Association is involved by way of a small "j" (joint) committee in a review of the Grievance Policy. This is overdue but the timing is a little awkward in as much as there are two ongoing grievances that have reached the final stage. Hearings were conducted and we are waiting for the judgements to come down. It is awkward being involved in a review of a policy that is in operation with some critical decisions still to be announced.

It would be an unusual report that did not say there are further revisions to the Tenure and Promotion Policy under discussion. Again, there is a small drafting committee at work involving representatives of the administration and Faculty Association. The main focus of the work is the appeals process and some related issues having to do with definition of new evidence and so forth.

In the Joint Committee we are continuing discussions about a policy on the confidentiality of electronic communications for faculty. The MUFA Executive approved such a policy but in the Joint Committee it has met with some resistance from the administration who prefer to develop a policy for all employees. We are engaged in that discussion and I suspect that it will be going on for a few more months.

David Hitchcock has already referred to the committee on retirement issues that the President appointed and on which Les Robb represents us. My recollection is that there were two main sets of terms of reference identified by Peter George when he set up the committee and invited all employee groups to name representatives. The first has to do with the question of whether some different form of pension plan might be structured, specifically a money purchase plan as opposed to the existing defined benefits plan. And then secondly, the question of whether some of the surplus might be used to pay for medical benefits for retirees, expenses that are presently paid out of the operating budget. We have joined the committee, expecting, as will all employee groups, that there will have to be some form of *quid pro quo* offered in return for any advantage realized by the University from these negotiations. If you wish to ask, Les can comment on those discussions.

Finally, we are involved in discussions on a policy for accommodation of students with disabilities. This has been before the MUFA Executive quite recently. There are some related issues that are of concern to us as faculty members and you will be hearing more about them.

In this final section of my report, I will comment on relations with various bodies. Those with the administration continue, I think, to be fairly good. The Joint Committee arrangement is working and the Committee meets regularly. We are now into the business of salary negotiation, we have had several meetings over the past several months and the process seems to be working satisfactorily, albeit slowly.

The Library Negotiations Committee, on which the Faculty Association has four and the administration three representatives, is at work. John Platt is our senior person on the committee. I do not think it is overstating the point to say that that Committee is not working quite as smoothly as we would like.

Our relations with the Clinical Faculty Association are maintained through representation on each other's Executive. I go to the meetings of the Clinical Faculty Association that are held monthly at 8:00 o'clock in the morning. The Clinical Faculty Association has some very difficult issues before it and I am afraid that from my vantage point I do not see that we have much to offer in the way of assistance except for moral encouragement. There are at least two major issues. Clinical faculty, so-called, receive part of their remuneration through the Regional Medical Associates as the result of seeing patients and providing health care. In the past, a number of these clinical faculty had as part of their salary a base that was paid out of the University funds that the Faculty receives. Increasingly, that Faculty is reducing those base salaries, using those monies presumably to support other faculty, and the clinical faculty in turn are being asked to meet more of the costs of the Faculty's activities by way of their clinical work. From my perspective, the clinical faculty are working very hard in terms of seeing patients and so forth, and this must have consequences in terms of their ability to do their educational activities and, for many of them, their research activities. The issue of the role of clinical earnings in Health Sciences and what it means for individual faculty members is a very complex one and the Clinical Faculty Association is striving to address it.

A related, but more difficult issue, is the question of the Clinical Faculty Association's involvement in the budgeting process within the Faculty. Naturally, they would like to have more of a say in regard to how clinical earnings are used within the Faculty and they are having some difficult jurisdictional battles. They have sought over the past year to get the administration to agree to put in place a joint committee mechanism similar to the one we have, so that they might have a forum in which to air these issues and to be involved in decisions related to remuneration. The administration has yet to agree. The Clinical Faculty Association has been involved in discussions with CAUT, possibly with a view to joining CAUT as an independent member. That has prompted some general discussion within CAUT about the role of clinical faculty associations. Those discussions appear to have been put on the back-burner for the moment.

The last topic I will mention concerns our relations with the part-time instructors. These relations hardly exist in any tangible form. Across the country, the subjects of the role of part-time instructors and their relations to faculty associations are being addressed and some of you may have heard how the UBC Faculty Association has just announced that part-time instructors there have joined the Association. But the pattern varies across the country. In many universities the part-time instructors are represented by the faculty association; in others, the situation is the same as here, part-time instructors have their own union and the relations with the faculty association are virtually non-existent and in others, the part-time instructors are unorganized and not represented by anyone. I think it is unfortunate that the Faculty Association was outflanked on this campus in representing the part-time instructors. They are, as we know, a very diverse group that includes professionals from the city who teach courses but they include also many people who are just like us, who have PhD's, who want to get permanent jobs and who, because of the vagaries of the market, are stuck in part-time positions teaching a few courses. I think it is a pity that we do not represent these people. The issue of the relations between our two groups came into focus last fall when the threat of a strike by the part-time instructors loomed. At the time, a certain officer from the Department of Human Resources issued statements implying that full-time faculty members would step in, in the event of a strike, to teach courses that would be affected. I contacted the Provost who agreed that the subject of such an arrangement had not ever been broached with the full-time faculty and our Association. Fortunately, the strike was averted but I think, and I do not want to suggest a timetable for this, there needs to occur a discussion of this subject in the Joint Committee. My hope would be that we could affirm a principle that in the event of any labour dispute on campus, the taking on of extra instructional duties by full-time faculty members beyond those which have been normally assigned to them, is a voluntary matter and that refusal to do any such additional duties should not be grounds for any form of disciplinary action.

Les King

Extending Same Sex Survivor Benefits

With the support of the Faculty Association, the Board of Governors passed a same sex spouse amendment to the McMaster Pension Plan at its December meeting. **This amendment means that lesbian and gay employees are now entitled to income protection for their partners -- protection that they have been required to pay for as members of the Pension Plan but which, unlike their heterosexual colleagues, they have been previously unable to claim.** This newly extended entitlement brings pension benefits at McMaster into line with all other employee benefits that have recognized same sex relationships for some years now.

The amendment follows from a decision of the Ontario Court of Appeal in April 1998 requiring that the definition of spouse in the Income Tax Act be changed to include same sex couples. This decision represented the culmination of years of legal challenges and sexual orientation discrimination cases. Earlier legal rulings had certainly found the terms of the Income Tax Act discriminatory and, concerned by that, some employers responded by finding ways to provide payments equivalent to survivor benefits. However, these payments had to come from sources other than pension plans as -- until April 1998 -- failure to comply with the definition of spouse in the Income Tax Act jeopardized the registration of pension plans with Revenue Canada.

The court decision established a secure (rather than discretionary and piecemeal) basis of entitlement for same sex survivor benefits and pressed employers to amend their pension plans. As this decision and its implications translate into the McMaster context, a couple of points require continued attention:

Communication of the amendment to all pension plan members is an important next step: if people are to take advantage of the extension of income protection, they must be aware of it and know how to claim it. Asked about this point, Robert Tangney (Manager, Benefits, Compensation and HRIS) assures me that a letter is being prepared to outline the change and clarify the administrative procedures to be followed (designating a beneficiary etc). He notes, too, that attention will be given in Human Resources to ensuring that forms and written materials concerning employee benefits use inclusive language with respect to family status.

The effective date of the amendment to McMaster's plan is April 23, 1998 -- the date of the Ontario Court of Appeal decision. Colleagues in same sex relationships who retired before that date cannot benefit from the extended entitlement. The University's Committee Against Homophobia and Heterosexism (a committee of faculty, staff and students convened two years ago) has raised with the President the possibility of using some of the pension fund surplus or some other appropriate source to make provision for them. It is likely that only a small number of retirees would avail themselves of such a provision; thus, its financial implications would be slight, even as its symbolic implications for fairness and equity would be considerable.

The extension of survivor benefits and attention to these outstanding questions about communication and entitlement represent the kinds of practical and symbolic steps that, cumulatively, build an environment in which lesbian and gay colleagues are accorded equitable treatment and can safely make themselves known and visible. At McMaster, as in all institutions, striving for an environment that is fair and respectful in relation to these and other groups traditionally marginalized and overlooked is very much a work in progress

Jane Aronson

Mini-Holiday from Dues Payments

For another year MUFA members will see a slightly larger March paycheque. At its regular meeting on February 8, 1999, the Executive of the McMaster University Faculty Association voted unanimously to reduce the mill rate from 5.3 to 2.5 for the month of March ONLY. A surplus of income over expenditures for this fiscal year is projected in the Nine-Month Budget review 1998/99. In addition, MUFA reserves are in a healthy state. Therefore, members benefit

by a mini- holiday from dues payments.

Marilyn Parsons
MUFA Treasurer

Convocation Address -- Henry Becker

This article is the text of a convocation address given by Dr. Henry Becker at Queen's University on October 30, 1998 [at the School of Graduate Studies]. Henry Becker is my father and has given his permission that it be published in the Faculty Association *Newsletter*. Dr. Becker retired last year from a long and distinguished career at Queen's as a Professor of Chemical Engineering, and was Director of the Centre for Advanced Gas Combustion Technology (CAGCT). He also occupied the British Gas, Consumers' Gas, NSERC Industrial Research Chair in Gas Combustion Engineering and won numerous awards for both teaching and research, including the Izaak Walton Killam Memorial Prize in 1992, in recognition of outstanding achievement and exceptional contribution to the advancement of research in Chemical Engineering. The speech offers us an inspiring contemplation on the value of a graduate education. Given the current political climate of our times in which the university is viewed increasingly as a corporate entity, with its worth measured in terms of numbers of "clients served", industrial partnerships and the like, it is worth being reminded that there are larger issues than the corporate bottom line.

Sue Becker, Associate Professor of Psychology

Mr. Chancellor, Mr. Principal, Mr. Rector; fellow Faculty members; graduands, and your families and friends:

A Russian proverb says, "We do not study to learn wisdom but to pass examinations"! In the larger game, the same deplorable attitude can be held to apply to university degrees. In my experience, that observation strikes close to reality for quite a few students in undergraduate schooling. However, it is gloriously rare in graduate studies. I'm sure that you, today's graduands, almost all came to your programs thirsting for knowledge and understanding. Even more admirably, most of you hoped to apply talents and develop skills in the advancement and application of knowledge through original research. Your presence today to receive your degrees is proof you succeeded in your quests. I also feel, though, that most of you would agree with the narrator in Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground* who said,

...man is a frivolous and incongruous creature, and perhaps, like a chess-player, loves the process of the game, not the end of it. And who knows (there is no saying with certainty), perhaps the only goal on earth to which mankind is striving lies in the incessant process of attaining, in other words, in life itself....

Your celebration today would surely be rather empty if it meant nothing more than, "Thank God that's over!" Just as important are the *futures* you have opened through your efforts, the new *attainments* that will follow for the benefit of society, the further advancement and application of *knowledge*, and, not least, the securing of your bread and butter through occupations that are at once *challenging, congenial, and creative!*

And this raises the intriguing question, what may your futures hold? What will the major problems be? Where will your efforts most be needed? Where should you put your priorities?

Of course, some may jest that your entire experience as graduate students, if you've been doing thesis research, has been to advance in great depth on a very narrow front, namely the area of your problem. In that view, your fate might be like that portrayed in the famous limerick:

There once was a student named Bessor
Whose knowledge grew lessor and lessor.
It at last grew so small
He knew nothing at all,
And today he's a college professor!

Seriously, there can be little doubt that in your lifetimes science and technology will continue to burgeon and you should never want for interesting work, *if you are flexible enough to look for it where current priorities dictate*. I shall not attempt to describe specific developments that may occur, that you may be involved in. The journals, magazines and newspapers are full of such discussion and I can only recommend that you become, if you aren't already, voracious

readers with a critical eye for ideas and opportunities.

When I completed my doctorate at MIT in 1961, the convocation speaker was the notorious futurologist Herman Kahn who offered a plethora of long-range predictions, most of which can now be seen as amusing but quite outrageous. I rather agree with one of my heroes, the great chemist Linus Pauling who said in one of his last interviews, "I don't care to comment about the future of anything". However, *there's much that's not well in the world that I, a new retiree, am leaving in your hands*. In my remaining remarks this afternoon, I shall therefore focus attention on some of the major issues of that unwellness that should affect future developments in science and technology, the sort of world you live in, and the work you might do. What I will say seems pretty obvious to me, and to many other reasonable people, but much of it goes against the momentum of recent conventional wisdom. And therein lies a challenge for you. In life, you should never cease to question conventional assumptions and practices but pragmatically and critically examine the alternatives, looking for truth and optimality as you have learned to do in your graduate research.

Issue number 1 is the high rate of unemployment, in almost every country. Karl Marx famously described how untamed capitalism needs a substantial pool of unemployed workers as a safety valve, to dampen wild surges in wages that would otherwise occur whenever labour falls into short supply. This is a barbarous economic control device, and it is a major disgrace of our time that it has returned in force. Every human should have opportunities for meaningful work to provide a decent standard of living and to make her or his contribution to society. The challenge for those graduating with the Master's in Public Administration and the MBA, and indeed for all graduands, is to not accept this situation lying down, to do what you can to promote alternatives, to change the situation with all possible speed.

Issue number 2 is the decay in social responsibility and civic spirit among many employers, most notably in many multinational corporations that have achieved the size and clout of big national economies and move about the world like buccaneers, looking for the cheapest labour, the lowest taxes and the highest plunder and profits. The challenge to you graduands as you take up roles in the arena is to do what you can to foster good citizenship among employers at the global level, the national and the local.

Issue number 3 is the frenetic pursuit of economic growth that drives the policies of so many businesses and governments. It is high time to recall the virtues of stability, and sometimes even of shrinkage, and not to deride these as stagnation or slow death. Ultimately, the truth of the matter, which most of us realise, is that the world's population is getting much too large while most natural resources are being rapidly depleted. It appears that our Earth can support, in the long run, a population of perhaps *two billion*. Energy needs, for example, might then be met almost indefinitely from the biosphere alone, through the systematic cropping of trees and plants like hemp. The transition from the present state to this ultimate, sustainable steady state must be accomplished within one to two hundred years, or the consequences for humanity and many living species on the globe are likely to be dire. The challenge to you graduands is to gear your thinking to this framework, to promote attitudes, plans and policies that will move governments, companies and citizens in the required direction.

Issue number 4 is the notion that there is too much government, that there should in fact be as little government activity as possible, that private enterprise, given free exercise, will always do a better job. Well, that's just not true! First, there are many activities that entrepreneurs will not touch, because the profit isn't there, yet we as citizens very much need them. Second, government is needed to regulate and control, to see that laws and standards are complied with, to ensure that the marketplace doesn't degenerate into a den of warring thieves, the spectacle we are now witnessing in the former Soviet countries. Third, we also want and need publicly owned museums, parks, and laboratories, and even some crown corporations! Government represents *us*, the citizens; it is *our* voice and *our* enterprise. It's time to stop this silly and ruinous fashion of treating it like an irresponsible third party that screws the public and hampers business! The challenge to you graduands is to enter the public service unhesitatingly, to take pride in your work there and make the organisation succeed! Canada once had a great public service and it can again. I have some insider knowledge of this from the first seven years of my career, spent in the National Research Council of Canada.

Issue number 5 is the current notion that economics is just about everything, that all human activity of any importance is somehow located in the market place and can be measured in dollars and cents. To those so inclined, the remark of Oscar Wilde is surely appropriate, that, "We live in the age of the overworked and the undereducated; the age in which

people are so industrious that they become absolutely stupid". Or again, "They know the price of everything and the value of nothing". The potentialities of life are vastly greater than that! The challenge to you graduands is to richly expand your lives within and beyond your work. Don't fail to love and nourish your families, be involved in your communities, cultivate and cherish friendships! Discover art, become connoisseurs of music, read widely and well, give time to sports you enjoy. Be one of those who appreciate the wonderful work our graduands in art conservation will be doing. As a scientist and an academic, I am conscious of course, of the special satisfactions to be had from research and scholarship, in which there can simultaneously be discovered the true, the good and the beautiful. For applied scientists, there is the additional pleasure of creating things that are useful!

Issue number 6, the last I shall raise today, is the moral neutrality of science and technology. Both can be used for good or ill, and both have great potential either way. It is we humans who must decide. The challenge to you graduands is to promote the beneficial or benign use of science and technology and to oppose the harmful. This may sometimes bring you into conflict with your organisation or your colleagues. I wish you courage and good luck in dealing with that, but it is of great importance that you try your best. You will do this for the greater good of society, and ultimately to preserve your own integrity.

In conclusion, this convocation is special for me, and not only because I have the honour of being your speaker. It may be the last I will ever attend. For sure, it is the last at which one of my students will graduate; today Peter Gogolek, one of my best, of whose achievements I am very proud, will receive his PhD. It has been a constant pleasure in my career, and one of my greatest rewards, to teach graduate students and to work with them as colleagues in research. I often think I have received more from them than they from me. I am sure that most, if not all, of my fellow faculty members feel the same of their experiences. On their behalf, I would like to thank *you*, all of today's graduands, for bringing so much joy and satisfaction to our lives. We hope you have benefited in equal measure from your associations with us! We offer you our heartfelt congratulations on your graduation, and the best of wishes for your futures.

MUFA Librarians Elect Two to Sit on LPC

The Policy on Librarian Classification and Salary Administration, which was approved by the Provost on October 13, 1998, provides for a Levels and Promotions Committee (LPC) on which two librarians elected by all MUFA librarians are to sit.

Ballots were mailed to all MUFA librarians on January 26 and counted by David Blewett, the Returning Officer for this election, on February 8.

Anne McKeage of the Health Sciences Library has been selected for a two-year term and **Olga Perkovic** has been elected as the University Library representative for a three-year term -- the Policy states that the initial appointment of the University Library librarian should be for three years to ensure overlapping terms of the MUFA elected members.

YEAR 2000 CHALLENGE

Message from Rome: 

January 18, 1 B.C.

Dear Cassius,

Are you still working on the Y0K problem? This change from B.C. to A.D. is giving us a lot of headaches and we haven't much time left. I don't know how people will cope with working the wrong way around. Having been working happily downwards forever, now we have to start thinking upwards!

You would think that someone would have thought of it earlier and not left it to us to sort out at the last minute. I spoke to Caesar the other evening. He was livid that Julius hadn't done something about it when he was sorting out the

calendar. He said he could see why Brutus turned nasty.

We called in the consulting astrologers, but they simply said that continuing downwards using minus B.C. won't work. As usual, the consultants charged a fortune for doing nothing useful. As for myself, I just can't see the sand in an hourglass flowing upwards.

We have heard that there are 3 wise men in the east working on the problem, but unfortunately they won't arrive till it's all over. Some say the world will cease to exist at the moment of transition. Anyway we are continuing to work on this blasted YOK problem and I will send you a parchment if anything further develops.

Plutonium