

# NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER - NOVEMBER 1997, VOLUME 24.2, Jeffery Donaldson, EDITOR

## MUFA EXECUTIVE VOTES TO SUPPORT TEACHERS IN THEIR OPPOSITION TO BILL 160

The MUFA Executive, at its meeting on October 29, 1997, unanimously passed the following motion:

As part of the Ontario educational community, the Executive of the McMaster University Faculty Association opposes the passage of Bill 160 in its current form. This Bill transfers decision-making power pertaining to education, including power over terms and conditions of employment, to the provincial cabinet. Issues like class size and hours in the classroom, which are now the subject of free collective bargaining between teachers and the school boards which employ them, would be decided by the provincial cabinet, with no negotiation with teachers. For this reason, the Executive of MUFA calls on the government of Ontario to reach an accommodation with provincial teachers' federations which will remove the objectionable aspects of Bill 160.

Some members of the Executive would have preferred a stronger motion that would have given support to the actual work stoppage of the teachers. The majority of members, however, were of the view that we should not confuse that issue -- the particular form of protest -- with the more important issue concerning our opposition to provisions of Bill 160.

A major concern of the Executive is that it overrides provisions within agreements between local teachers' federations and school boards. It would be one thing to change the bargaining relationship to a provincial one from the existing local ones. It is quite another to simply strip existing agreements.

If the Bill were applied to universities and their faculty members, rather than to school boards and their teachers, we would be up in arms. It would be as if the legislation overrode all the individual University Acts in the province and abolished tenure, lengthened the university teaching year, increased the average number of classes a faculty member must teach, and so on.

For these reasons the Executive unanimously supported the above motion.

*A. L. Robb  
Past President*



## Letter to the Editor



The following letter was received in response to Bill Smyth's Letter to the Editor which appeared in the September 1997 MUFA Newsletter (Volume 24.1)

Bill Smyth is fortunate that I possess something resembling a sense of humour. Since he sent his letter to MUFA I have extracted a free lunch from him and we have had a pleasant chat about mutual interests in Africa, and in academic freedom.

Dr. Smyth was unaware that if MUFA criticized the NDP's "zero tolerance" guidelines a few years ago, it did so in part because of my own concerns about the NDP policy. As chair of the Senate Human Rights Committee, I spent over two years actively trying to defend both procedural justice and academic freedom, as McMaster drafted its policies on sexual harassment and anti-discrimination. I drafted a university policy on academic freedom, which MUFA accepted and Senate passed, once it became clear to me that academic freedom was at risk in the climate of politically correct attempts to circumscribe free speech on campus. I continue to be very concerned about academic freedom: I express this concern through my membership in the Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee of CAUT, which takes about 15 working days per year of my time.

As for my unfortunate use of the word "notorious", I have already apologized privately to SAFS [Society for Academic Freedom & Scholarship] for my use of this word, and am happy to do so again publicly. I did mean, as Smyth asked, notorious "among those opposed to academic freedom", etc. I was not expressing my own personal views. While I cannot join SAFS myself as I disagree with its policies on employment equity, I agree with Bill Smyth that SAFS is a leading defender of academic freedom, and of free speech more generally, in Canada. It is tragic that so few faculty associations, and even fewer university administrations, devote such attention to academic freedom: indeed that many countenance, or even mandate, controls on freedom of speech on campus.

I am very pleased that as a result of this public exchange, I have made the acquaintance of Dr. Smyth.

*Rhoda E. Howard*  
*Sociology*



## **U.S. University Professors Call TechBC Legislation a "Grave Error"**

An association representing 45,000 university and college professors in the United States has joined in the campaign to ensure academic freedom at the fledgling Technical University of British Columbia (TechBC), the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) and the Confederation of University Faculty Associations of British Columbia (CUFA/BC) announced on October 27, 1997.

The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) has written to B.C. Education Minister Paul Ramsey expressing its "alarm" at the lack of guarantees for academic freedom and of an assured role for professors in academic decisions of the new institution. Mary Burgan, general secretary of the AAUP, warns that if TechBC were to proceed without such guarantees, "the Technical University of British Columbia would begin with a deficit of acceptance by other universities and university faculties in North America." She urges Ramsey to avoid this "grave error".

The AAUP is the keeper of the influential, and controversial, list of administrations of U.S. universities and colleges which have been censured for violation of the generally recognized principles of academic freedom and tenure endorsed by the AAUP, the Association of American Colleges and Universities, and more than 150 other professional and educational organizations.

"The support of our U.S. colleagues is gratifying," said Bill Bruneau, president of CAUT. "It demonstrates clearly that the government cannot simply call TechBC a university and expect it to be accepted by the academic community in Canada and internationally. A *real* university embodies freedom of thought and respect for academic expertise."

In her letter, Burgan makes particular mention of the effect the lack of academic freedom will have on TechBC's future students.

"The freedom of scientific and technical faculty to pursue questions in their disciplines is an essential element of training for the next generation of scientists," writes Burgan. "The students at this new university must learn the value of unfettered questioning, if they are to contribute usefully in their chosen fields. It would be most unfortunate to teach students, by example, to limit their curiosity and their investigations to a dogged pursuit of commercially acceptable results."

CAUT and CUFA/BC are optimistic that a solution can be achieved.

"All along we've said that there are ways to recognize the unique mission of TechBC while respecting the fundamental characteristics of a university," said Robert Clift, executive director of CUFA/BC. "We would prefer that the government and the administration of TechBC work with us now to achieve such a solution, rather than wait for the black cloud over TechBC to grow larger."



## **December 5 Workshop on Faculty Evaluation**

The Faculty Association has invited one of the world's leading authorities on evaluation to speak at McMaster on the evaluation of university teaching. Michael Scriven, professor of psychology at Claremont Graduate University in California, will be speaking on the morning of Friday, December 5 (the first day of the December examination period).

The impetus to sponsor such an event arose from concerns about the validity of the student ratings used at McMaster, concerns which several MUFA members expressed in e-mail discussion of the proposal to make public summaries of student ratings of overall teaching effectiveness (a proposal which has since become policy). The event has two functions:

1. to enable faculty members to inform themselves about current thinking on the evaluation of teaching;
2. to promote improvement in McMaster's system of evaluating teaching, as a result of reflection on the information provided.

Scriven's talk, entitled "The State of the Art in Faculty Evaluation", begins sharply at 9:15 a.m. in Camelford Hall (Divinity College 226), with coffee available from 8:45 a.m. After his presentation and a general question/comment period, the group will split into small discussion groups, among which Scriven will rotate. The groups will then report back to the entire group, with Scriven reacting to their reports. The session ends at 12:30 p.m. To help the Association with its planning, we are asking those who wish to attend to pre-register, which will give priority in seating. You can pre-register either by e-mail to "mufa@mcmaster.ca", or by sending through campus mail the form printed on the back page of this *Newsletter*. (If you register by e-mail, please include the information requested on the form.)

Professor Scriven will be speaking both generally and with specific reference to McMaster's system. He is the author of *Evaluation Thesaurus*, which has gone into several editions, and of many papers on evaluation, including three influential papers on the evaluation of teaching:

"The Validity of Student Ratings", *Instructional Evaluation* 92, 2 (September 1988): 5-18

"Duty-Based Teacher Evaluation", *Journal of Personnel Evaluation in Education* 1 (1988): 319-334

"The Design and Use of Forms for the Student Evaluation of Teaching", *Instructional Evaluation* 10, 1 (January 1989): 1-12.

Professor Scriven's ideas have inspired some aspects of the evaluation system now in use at McMaster, in particular the student ratings forms recently adopted in the Faculties of Science and Social Sciences. So he should be a useful source of information about them.

Scriven is a provocative speaker whose ideas often go against the mainstream, but which he defends quite persuasively. Here are some samples:

"...the validity of student rating forms is just as dependent on the techniques and contexts of their administration as on the intrinsic merit of the form..." ("Validity", p. 7)

"...visitors [to the classroom] are badly placed for many reasons: (i) the time they are present fails to meet minimal standards for sample size; (ii) they distort what they observe by their presence...; (iv) they often bring in personal prejudices of an unknown magnitude (if they know the evaluatee outside the classroom) ... and (vii) they lack some of the crucial cognitive qualifications to judge the adequacy of the explanations..." ("Validity", p. 9)

"Students are...the best-placed judges of at least *prima facie* pedagogical competence -- the teacher's ability to explain things to them..." ("Validity", p. 10)

"... to leave them [student ratings] out of a system for faculty or course evaluation is no worse a sin than to include only them." ("Validity", p. 15)

"... the duties of a teacher do not include following the latest fashion in teaching style, or indeed any particular teaching style." ("Duty-Based", p. 321)

"Within the list of duties, the duties of self-evaluation and self-development are arguably the most important." ("Duty-Based", p. 322)

"Student rating forms can only tell us about certain aspects of teaching." ("Design", p. 1)

".. Some criticism of the overall question has been voiced, based on the fact that the overall ratings will reflect very different weighting of the various aspects of teaching, by different students. This is certainly true. But if you don't have a proof that some particular weighting of dimensions is correct, you should surely allow the customers to make that decision." ("Design", p. 9)

"The key problem [in designing the overall question on a student rating form] is to avoid using the sort of scale ... which finishes up with (almost) everyone in the top two categories." ("Design", p. 10)

For further information, contact the MUFA office (e-mail "mufa@mcmaster.ca" or phone 905-525-9140, ext. 24682) or David Hitchcock (e-mail "hitchckd@mcmaster.ca" or phone extension 23464).

The Association acknowledges with thanks financial and moral support from the Office of the Provost.

*D. Hitchcock, Chair  
Academic Affairs Committee*



# OCUFA Teaching & Academic Librarianship Awards



NOMINATIONS are invited from individuals, informal groups of faculty or students, or both, and such organizations as local faculty associations, faculty or college councils, university committees concerned with teaching and learning, librarians, local student councils, departments, alumni, etc.

GUIDELINES to assist in organizing a nomination should be consulted by prospective nominators and are available on request from your Faculty Association Office or the Provincial Office of OCUFA.

Nominations must include a covering nomination form, a nominator's brief, and sufficient evidence, from as many sources as possible, to make it clear that outstanding work deserving of recognition has been done.

DEADLINE for receipt of nominations: **February 20, 1998**

**The original and six copies of the submission** should be sent to:

OCUFA Teaching & Academic  
Librarianship Awards Committee  
27 Carlton Street, Suite 400  
Toronto, Ontario M5B 1L2

INQUIRIES TO: 416-979-2117 or your Faculty Association Office (ext. 24682; mufa@mcmaster.ca)



## GENERAL MEETING

McMaster University Faculty Association


**Thursday, DECEMBER 11, 1997**

CONVOCAATION HALL (in University Hall)  
2:00 p.m.



## Housing Information



 Spacious house for rent in desirable Locke Street South/Charlton Avenue area. 5 bedrooms & 2 baths, private deck, walking distance to Hess Village, downtown and GO station; bus stop across the street. \$1200 per month (long-term lease available). Call either Duncan or Paulette Jeffrey for more information (416-287-6284). Available now.

❓ Large living room with fireplace, dining room, main floor family room, 4 bedrooms, 2 baths, study. Best Westdale location near McMaster; excellent condition; close to ravine trails. Furnished or unfurnished. Available December 1, 1997 to June 30, 1998 (dates flexible). Rent negotiable. Call ext. 27302.

❓ Sabbatical house -- January to June 1998 (dates flexible) -- 32 Tally Ho, Dundas. Well established neighbourhood; treed ravine lot adjoining conservation area and hiking trails; 5 minutes from McMaster. 4 bedrooms, 2 baths, large living room and family room, 2 fireplaces, laundry in kitchen, office, sauna, sunporch, deck, landscaped gardens. Comfortably furnished, piano, all appliances, linens, bikes. Super house for children and/or entertaining. \$1200/month plus utilities. Contact Duncan MacDougall (Kinesiology, ext. 24647 or 627-7309).

❓ Quiet residential area in Dundas. 4 bedrooms, 2 baths, fully furnished, finished basement. 5 minute drive to McMaster. Easy access to schools and parks. Suitable for visiting faculty member with family. Reasonable rent. Available January 1998. For information, contact Grace Ferracuti, ext. 23315 or ferracu@ece.eng.mcmaster.ca.

❓ REQUIRED 2 or 3 bedroom house or apartment in the McMaster vicinity for Hooker Distinguished Visiting Professor. January 1 to April 30, 1998. Contact Carmen Camilleri, Classics Department, ext. 24311 or e-mail: classics@mcmaster.ca



## Western Begins Certification Drive

After the administration indicated during negotiations that it could not see a legal way (outside of certification) to effect a mandatory membership plan at Western, after it reiterated its position on binding salary arbitration (it would only permit arbitration on parts of the settlement -- the "total value" unless the Association agreed to an administrative-devised salary policy), after it insisted on a further 6 months of negotiations (on a semi-weekly basis) with no firm commitment to an agreement at the end of this period, the Faculty Association Executive at Western decided to suspend negotiations pending a consultation with its membership. It subsequently decided to recommend to the membership the commencement of a certification campaign.


At a membership meeting held on October 28, the membership of the Association voted to start a certification campaign. Cards are now being signed by faculty at Western. No target date has been set for the conclusion of card-signing and the actual certification vote.


*OCUFA Communication  
October 29, 1997*


## ❓ TO GAB OR NOT TO GAB

### G-MUFAGAB, that is

In recent weeks the traffic on g-mufagab has been moving at breakneck speed. In our eagerness to encourage informed debate and, at the same time, obtain input from the membership, we fear that we have tried the patience of some. Many have enjoyed the interaction with fellow members; others have found it "too much of a good thing". If you find yourself in the second category, here are a few suggestions that might be useful the next time there is a spurt of activity on g-mufagab.

 If your INBOX is overflowing with g-mufagab messages, just press "D" right down the line of offending communications -- you don't even have to view them -- and they will magically disappear when you quit e-mail.

 Call the MUFA office (ext. 24682) or e-mail (mufa@mcmaster.ca) and ask to have your I.D. removed from the list until the current flurry subsides.

 Pick up a copy of Clifford Stoll's *Silicon Snake Oil: Second Thoughts on the Information Highway* (Doubleday 1995) to learn how to cope with discussion groups. See especially Chapters 12 and 12.

We will be looking into developing a chat group, but this method for discussion is not as user-friendly as the distribution list (this could be good news to some).

This may not be a good time to raise the issue, but we would appreciate hearing from those of you who are not on "g-mufa", as opposed to "g-mufagab". The g-mufa list is used ONLY for important notices and announcements and has proven to be an efficient means of communicating with the membership.



## A Tip for Married Faculty Considering Retirement

If your spouse has a good benefit plan at her or his own place of work, it may be that you have not paid much attention to whether your benefits are set up as "family coverage" or "single coverage". As you approach retirement, this is something that it would be best for you to review. McMaster continues to pay all the premiums on medical and dental benefits into retirement while other plans may require the plan member to take over some or all of the cost. Your coverage continues in the form it is in on the date of retirement -- if you have single coverage at that date you will continue to have single coverage. The message is clear -- switch to family coverage before retirement or, better yet, right now. There is no reason not to do so (though there was once a reason to do so when we paid our own OHIP premiums). You might think you are doing McMaster a good turn by registering for "single" coverage. You are not. It is true that family coverage is more expensive to buy from an insurance company. But McMaster self-insures. Insurance companies only manage the plan for us.

A recent experience might help to convince you this is a matter worth checking into. A faculty member who took the early retirement package last year recently discovered that his spouse no longer had any medical coverage. His spouse had a very good plan of her own and always used that plan so the faculty member never paid much attention to how his coverage was set up. On retirement, his spouse took a cash "termination benefit" from her employer rather than a pension. By doing this, however, she lost her own medical coverage. As the McMaster employee had only single coverage at retirement, this is what he kept after retirement. The moral of the story: check your coverage now.

*Les Robb  
Professor of Economics*



# More Committee Assignments

Karen Bird (Political Sciences, KTH 543, ext. 23701) and Mary Tremblay (Rehabilitation Science, T16-128C, ext. 27822) have agreed to sit on MUFA's Human Rights Committee.

Geoff Norman (Clinical Epidemiology & Biostatistics, HSC 2C14, ext. 23162) has joined the Academic Affairs Committee.



*This is reportedly an actual essay written by a college applicant to NYU in response to this question:*

**In order for the admissions staff of our college to get to know you, the applicant, better, we ask that you answer the following question:**

**Are there any significant experiences you have had, or accomplishments you have realized, that have helped to define you as a person?**

I am a dynamic figure, often seen scaling walls and crushing ice. I have been known to remodel train stations on my lunch breaks making them more efficient in the area of heat retention. I translate ethnic slurs for Cuban refugees, I write award-winning operas, and I manage time efficiently.

Occasionally, I tread water for three days in a row.

I woo women with my sensuous and godlike trombone playing, I can pilot bicycles up severe inclines with unflagging speed, and I cook Thirty-Minute Brownies in twenty minutes. I am an expert in stucco, a veteran in love and an outlaw in Peru.

Using only a hoe and a large glass of water, I once single-handedly defended a small village in the Amazon Basin from a horde of ferocious army ants. I play bluegrass cello, I was scouted by the Mets, and I am the subject of numerous documentaries. When I'm bored, I build large suspension bridges in my yard. I enjoy urban hang gliding. On Wednesdays, after school, I repair electrical appliances free of charge.

I am an abstract artist, a concrete analyst and a ruthless bookie. Critics worldwide swoon over my original line of corduroy evening wear. I don't perspire. I am a private citizen, yet I receive fan mail. I have been caller number nine and have won the weekend passes. Last summer I toured New Jersey with a travelling centrifugal-force demonstration.

I bat 400.

My deft floral arrangements have earned me fame in international botany circles. Children trust me.

I can hurl tennis rackets at small moving objects with deadly accuracy. I once read *Paradise Lost*, *Moby Dick*, and *David Copperfield* in one day and still had time to refurbish an entire dining room that evening.

I know the exact location of every food item in the supermarket. I have performed several covert operations with the CIA. I sleep once a week; when I do sleep, I sleep in a chair. While on vacation in Canada, I successfully negotiated with a group of terrorists who had seized a small bakery.

The laws of physics do not apply to me.

I balance, I weave, I dodge, I frolic, and my bills are all paid. On weekends, to let off steam, I participate in full-



contact origami. Years ago I discovered the meaning of life but forgot to write it down. I have made extraordinary four course meals using only a mouli and a toaster oven.

I breed prizewinning clams. I have won bullfights in San Juan, cliff-diving competitions in Sri Lanka and spelling bees at the Kremlin. I have played Hamlet, I have performed open-heart surgery, and I have spoken with Elvis.

But I have not yet gone to college.

