

MUFA NEWSLETTER
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Hamilton Days of Action

As we reported in last month's Newsletter, the Faculty Association Executive adopted a two-track approach to the events of February 23 and 24. Concerned about the impact of the PC government's cutbacks on higher education, the Executive encouraged members to participate in the Hamilton Days of Action protest in any way they considered suitable. At the same time, the Executive sent a delegate to the PC Conference which was the focus of the protest. The two tracks are represented in the reports below.

The View from Outside

George Sorger

Professor of Biology

When I entered my first meeting of the Coalition for Social Justice at the Self Help Centre I was pleased to see many familiar faces: McMaster faculty and students, old friends from the NDP, the trade union movement, church activists, an environmentalist and other known local activists. There were also a number of unfamiliar faces, including ones from the alternative press, the women's movement, representatives of the handicapped, the food banks and various civic action groups. There was a tangible feeling of optimism, that those present were participating in something important. I found this to be a refreshing relief from the pessimism that has surrounded so many of my conversations with friends about the right wing yet seemingly popular agenda of this government.

The following meetings were dedicated to organizing the days of protest on the 23 and 24 of February. Volunteers were needed to billet people from out of town. A research team, of McMaster faculty and students, was to find out the tax status of banks and their profits in order to have an educational sign at the demonstration. The food banks were to give some warmth and cheer to the public by giving out food at the protest. A street theatre group was to inject some humour. Each member of the Coalition reported on new groups and individuals contacted....There was only one week left.

Across from the Medical School, seated around a table eating falaffels, Drs. Chan, Kubursi, MacQueen, Sorger, Warner and Wells were engaged in a lively conversation. What to do about the lack of official representation of McMaster faculty at the demonstration? We have no mandate from the faculty, so we shall be a group of faculty. We need a name...."The Mac Profs", no...there is a group called PUMA in town, and the last three letters stand for union of marginalized activists, how about that?...laughter, let's get serious, McMaster Faculty for Social Justice, yes. We need a banner, it can be any combination of red, black and/or green. Don can be in charge of that, it's unanimous. We need a speaker, everyone pointed to someone else. It's unanimous, George will do it. Someone has to ask the organizers about this. It's unanimous, Don will do it. Many unanimous decisions were made.

We informed the Faculty Association of our intentions, and they, in turn, alerted the membership. Our faculty had now added its second front to the two pronged approach towards interaction with the Harris government. The inside front was to confront the Tories with logic and persuasion, by entering the convention and speaking to delegates. The outside front was to march outside the Convention Centre and inform the Tories that Hey, Hey, Ho, Ho, Mike Harris has got to go!

On the morning of the 23rd, the outside front unfurled its maroon and gray banner, McMaster Faculty for Social Justice, and arrived in full force of about one dozen, at Dundurn Park, where the march was starting. Some more faculty and students joined in. The sight was impressive; banners as far as the eye could see down York St., well made Union banners and flags and magnificent, but sometimes too small or illegible banners by activist groups. McMaster Faculty for Social Justice marched between the Amalgamated Clothing Workers and a Bell on wheels. The Food banks were on hand, giving out hot coffee and pizza, the street theatre group was there, with large and wonderful puppets representing Harris and Chretien, the research group presented their findings on a banner in front of the CIBC.

We finally arrived at Copps Coliseum and heard the speeches: a rousing call to justice from the United Church minister, applause and chants for the Union brothers and sisters, a knot in the throat for the AIDS activist and the handicapped speaker, a fast heart beat for the high school girl that raised the roof with her words, applause for the environmentalist, cheers for the McMaster Professor.

The next day the McMaster faculty for Social Justice met at Pier 4. It looked like a Kurosawa movie, troupes of people coming into the park with green flags flapping in the wind, followed by others with blue and yellow caps, then a contingent with blue flags, coming from the interminable line of buses, followed by crowds of local activists with their banners. Finally the march started. An estimated 100,000 people marched peacefully and noisily, telling the Harris government to stop transferring money from the social services we all require, to tax breaks for the well to do, who probably will not even invest it all in Canada, let alone in Ontario. We walked with the McMaster Staff Association and the Nurses.

As we marched by the Convention Centre, where the Tories were assembled, we passed the heavily armed special anti-riot forces, who stared at us through their military gear from behind their barricades. In front of me, Dr Warner's grandchild was speaking Hey Hey, Ho Ho, Mike Harris has to go, as he was being pushed by his mother in his pram.

After the speeches in front of Copps Coliseum, the marchers dispersed, the hot dog vendors went to the bank and Hamilton went back to normal. On TV and in the main media, the event was portrayed as a confrontation between the big Union Bosses and Mike Harris. The McMaster Professors for Social Justice, the McMaster inside flank, the social activists, churches, environmentalists, school children, handicapped, feminists, the researchers message in front of the CIBC, the street theatre, the food banks.....and all the rest of us were obviously not newsworthy enough. One person, who put up a sign, high up in an apartment building, saying *I Like Mike Harris*, was in all the papers and TV reports.

The View from Inside

Bill Smyth

Professor of Computer Science & Systems

Attending political conferences is not my idea of a good time. In fact, I had never been to one before. I had volunteered only because I felt partially responsible for MUFA's two-track policy and, as the Genghis Khan of the MUFA Executive, I felt perhaps better placed than some others to communicate with Progressive Conservatives. Still, I felt apprehensive: would I be pitted against slaving capitalists with intimidating eyeteeth whose only aim was the destruction of the university system?

As it turned out, my various worries were groundless. I had been concerned about finding parking in a barricaded downtown area, but when I arrived at 8:00 a.m. the streets were deserted and parking was easy. I had imagined a gathering of boring ideological uniformity, but the tone for the day was set at registration where I met a young woman of tumultuous rotundity named Lori: her main concern seemed to be to find a window from which she could wave to her many protesting friends. As the day went on, I discovered that the thousand or so delegates were very much a mixed bag: OISE-bashers, a man flogging a book bashing everyone from Bob Rae through Bill Davis to Preston Manning (I admire impartiality and I have ordered a copy), representatives of the teachers' union (with a hospitality suite, yet), a variety of students, an economist who once supported the NDP (but doesn't any more), a president of an Ontario university (not McMaster), and no doubt numerous other rare birds whom it was my misfortune not to meet.

I admit though that there was a strong PC flavour to the conference. In the opening plenary session, the jokes about the NDP got lots of laughs, and my apprehensions about being obliged to confront mindless ideology briefly returned. But it was not that way at all.

After the plenary session there were four hours of "breakout sessions" (I think I have that right) centred around our free lunch. These sessions dealt with specific topics such as budget, education, and so forth. The education sessions were held in a large room containing perhaps 15 round tables, each accommodating a dozen or so participants. Each table had one of four labels: Curriculum, Discipline, Delivery & Governance (whatever they are), and Colleges & Universities. I sat down at one of three C&U tables with a collection of others who were also interested in C&U, and

we talked. Yes, we actually talked.

At each table a "facilitator" was chosen whose task was to try to keep the conversation within the bounds of decency (the OISE- bashers were particularly hard to control). Also, a recorder was chosen at each table to write down worthy ideas and to give a brief oral report on them at the end of each hour. Then, just as at the Mad Tea Party, everybody switched seats and started over.

Who knows if it was worthwhile? But it was good conversation, nevertheless, with views of great diversity being expressed p reminiscent, if I may say so, of a MUFA Executive meeting. The notes recorded during each hour's session were put together for later perusal by John Snobelen, the Minister, who was there himself, in person, for the entire four hours. He spoke little, but moved from table to table and listened: he spent half an hour or so listening to the conversation at one of our C&U sessions. Also present and participating in the sessions was Terence Young, the Minister's parliamentary assistant, who had visited McMaster and talked with the MUFA Executive in October.

My main role at the conference was to act as front man for David Hitchcock who, with help from Les Robb, Valerie Parke and Bob Johnston, had prepared a brochure setting forth, with admirable clarity, brevity and absence of rhetoric, some basic ideas and facts about university education in Ontario. I handed out copies of this brochure at the entrance to the plenary session and then, with Sherry Cecil from the McMaster Office of Public Relations, handed out the remainder to participants in the education sessions. There were 700 of them, and they went like hotcakes. The four main points expressed in the brochure were the following:

- * universities are an investment;
- * Ontario's universities are efficient;
- * universities should be accessible;
- * quality is important.

These points were supported by charts, one of them showing that in 1995-96 the average Ontario student paid \$2800 in fees, fourth highest in Canada behind Alberta at \$3300 and Nova Scotia at \$3200. This particular chart had an impact at the highest level; when I met Mike Harris, fixed him with my glittering eye, and waved my brochure at him, he said "I know that brochure p it's the one that says we have to catch up with Nova Scotia!" This anecdote will confirm some in their belief that our Premier is callous and unfeeling; I take it to indicate he has a sense of humour.

It is probably too late to rescue an article remarkably free of substance and serious thought, but I suppose I should try. What were my impressions of the PC conference? I think that the government agrees with the four points made in our brochure, an opinion supported by the Minister's recent statements and by the draft discussion paper prepared by the Ministry of Education & Training. I also think the government believes that universities can function more efficiently than they currently do, a belief that my experience at McMaster leads me to share. I think the government is looking for constructive ideas or approaches or mechanisms that could be used to achieve the objectives of higher education better and at lower cost. I think the most useful approach to the government is to attempt to engage them in dialogue, to be constructive, to be open to change, to avoid fixed ideological positions. I personally feared much more the previous government's attempt to downgrade the importance of research in the university than I fear the present government's desire to manage public finances in a responsible way.

I left the conference at 4 p.m., confident that in skipping the Premier's closing speech I would miss nothing of substance. I expected the downtown streets to be filled with shouting protesters carrying placards and banners. But in fact the streets were just as I had left them eight hours earlier: almost devoid of life. Propped upside down against a shop front I saw a placard reading "THESE CUTS DON'T HEAL", and I wondered what line of argument this slogan could possibly be shorthand for. It was a pleasant sunny day and, as I walked to my car, I wondered what the protesters thought they had achieved, since no one inside the Convention Centre could have seen or heard any suggestion of their presence. No doubt talking inside had not accomplished anything either, but still, I couldn't help but feel that it was a big improvement on shouting.

You Asked?

Will you be retiring this year? Then the following information will be of interest to you.

CAUT MEMBERSHIP FOR RETIREES

For just \$10.00 per year, you can maintain your membership as a retired member. Your membership in this special category entitles you to continue receiving the CAUT *Bulletin* each month. In addition to keeping you current on events affecting academics, the *Bulletin* regularly features information on CAUT Group Services that are available to all CAUT members including retired faculty.

To join as a retired member, please write to:

CAUT
2675 Queensview Drive
Ottawa, Ontario K2B 8K2

or Fax CAUT at 613-820-7244

PARKING FOR RETIREES

1. Faculty and staff who have retired but have a post- retirement appointment for which they receive remuneration from the University shall pay for parking (effective July 1, 1992).
2. Faculty and staff who have retired on or before June 30, 1992 shall continue to receive free parking; in the case of those who are under 65 the free parking shall be provided on West Campus. Any who have already reached 65 and are parking on West Campus should receive a Central Campus sticker immediately.
3. Faculty and staff who retire after June 30, 1992 may obtain a permit which allows (i) free parking on West Campus at all times and (ii) free parking on Central Campus for the period May to August and after 12:30 p.m. on days when classes are held between September and April; alternatively such individuals may purchase, at the Central Campus rate for eight months, a permit for Central Campus.

Approved by Joint Committee

December 3, 1991p

Education IS Common Sense

Sponsored by the Campus Coalition at the University of Toronto, the "Education IS Common Sense" banner is touring the province of Ontario in order to raise public awareness regarding the effects on post-secondary education of reduced provincial funding. The banner, which measures fourteen feet wide and one hundred feet long, was on display at the Faculty Association Office on February 21 and 22 prior to being transported to Copps Coliseum for the Hamilton Days of Protest. Members of the campus community dropped by to sign the banner, the bottom fifty feet of which is a petition that organizers plan to present to the Ontario Legislature before final budgetary decisions are made.

Memorial Service

Tom Willey

A memorial service will be held on Friday, April 12, 1996, at 11 a.m. in the Divinity College Chapel for Tom Willey who died on February 18 [see Faculty Association Newsletter,

February 1996]. Dr. Willey, who came to McMaster 25 years ago, was an Associate Professor in the Department of History.

1996 3M Fellowships

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

The Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (STLHE) and 3M Canada Inc. are pleased to announce the continuation of the 3M Fellows Program with up to 10 awards for 1996.

THE AWARD

citation of excellence in recognition of exemplary contributions to teaching and learning.

a 3-day retreat at Chateau Montebello. All expenses are paid as part of the award.

ELIGIBILITY

Open to any individual teaching at a Canadian university regardless of discipline or level of appointment.

CRITERIA FOR THE AWARD

Excellence in teaching over a number of years principally (but not exclusively) at the undergraduate level, and

commitment to the improvement of university teaching within the candidate's own institution and perhaps beyond.

NOMINATION PROCEDURE

Nomination forms are available from the Instructional Development Centre, General Sciences Building, Room 217, Ext. 24540.

NOMINATION DEADLINE: MAY 17, 1996