

# THE INSTRUCTOR CUPE 3912

## Annual General Meeting

### 16 April 1pm : Please Come!

### SMU Private Dining Room

#### *Special points of interest:*

#### Articles include:

- Annual General Meeting and time to think about bargaining!
- Are you a teaching assistant?
- New TA union organizer, Noah Mitton!
- News from the University Sector
- Kidco and Union views
- Global Justice and Footprints for change

Cupe 3912 is holding its annual general meeting on April 16, in the Private Dining Room, at SMU. This room is in the Loyola Residence, across the hall from the Art Gallery. We will have:

1. *Election of officers* for the next year for executive committee member for the Mount, Dalhousie, and Saint Mary's. Come and meet your executive, and vote!

2. *Voting on bylaw revisions* Revisions will be posted on the cupe website

3. *Bargaining for our new contracts*

As 3912 prepares for negotiations for new Agreements, the three universities are likely to cry poor in this period of economic decline. Much of this will be related to recent declines in enrolment but university administrations have done little

to pressure the provincial government to lower tuition rates and demand funding increases. While both full- and part-time positions may decline in the near future, it is likely that the ratios of full- to part-time faculty will remain roughly the same, Universities simply cannot afford to operate without the work we do at the bargain rate for which we do it. Look for an email survey soon designed to get members input on bargaining issues!

*R. Lanning*



#### News from around the university sector *Robert Lanning, Chief Steward*

CUPE 3903 at York University was forced back to work by legislation after nearly 3 months of strike action. The demands the Union put forward will now be settled through binding arbitration. 3903's members are among the best paid contract (or part-time) faculty in Canada – even before the strike, plus they have negotiated benefit packages that should be the envy of part-timers in 3912. But the long strike, the

successful strike votes, the repeated rejection of offers from York's administration were a critical reflection of the Local's understanding of their own position; namely, that its members teach more than 50% of all courses at York (we teach around 40% at SMU and MSVU). As '3903' "Strike Facebook" pointed out, the "ratio of students to tenure-track (i.e.,

non-CUPE) professors during the 2007-2008 year is 33.8 to 1; when you include contract professors and TAs, the ratio is 15.6 to 1." Financially York, like other universities, benefits enormously from imbalances inherent in this split between tenured and contract faculty. But it was clear to the 3903 members that York depended on contract faculty to fulfil its  
*(continued page 3)*



# THE INSTRUCTOR

## As a TA Know your Rights!! *By Christina Behme*



### As a TA know your rights - are you working too much?

Being a TA is part of the academic experience for most graduate students. Some may even think it is part of our education. But that is not the case. As a TA/marker or demonstrator you are paid by the hour. Your contract specifies the number of hours for which you are paid, the time period for which you are paid, and the person for whom you work (your supervisor). In some cases your supervisor may expect you to work more hours than specified.

What should you do? Several things are important to keep in mind :

**1: Be Informed!** First find out if you are paid as TA or Marker/Demonstrator . Then, know what your duties are and how much time is allotted to each duty. Know your fixed times (e.g., attending lectures, holding office hours or tutorials). You should also find out the time limits for the duties that cannot easily be predicted (e.g., responding to student questions by e-mail, meetings outside the office hours, marking essays). As well, you should know the expectations of your supervisor (e.g., are you expected to provide detailed feedback to every paragraph of an essay or just a summary evaluation) .

### 2 : Communicate!

Contact your supervisor immediately if you find that one task takes substantially longer than anticipated. You should also express concerns when they arise! You might suggest an acceptable solution (i.e. giving less feedback, marking

fewer papers). Always be polite, but firm.

### 3 : Keep a Record!

Be sure you write down how long you work on each task , and keep a copy of any communication with your supervisor.

If you are working too many hours what should you do? The first step is to talk to your supervisor. In many cases this will resolve the problem. If she/he is not willing to adjust your workload, talk with the department head about your problem (if you are shy this 'talking' can be done by e-mail). If that does not solve the problem contact a Union representative (Troy Winters: email [VP.TA.Sexton.3912@members.cupe.ca](mailto:VP.TA.Sexton.3912@members.cupe.ca) , if you're on the Sexton campus or Christina Behme, if you're on the Studley campus: [VP.TA.Studley.3912@members.cupe.ca](mailto:VP.TA.Studley.3912@members.cupe.ca))

We will help you! But we need the facts; that's why record keeping is important. The Union has informal and formal ways to deal with your problem, we will explain the process to you and guide you through it.

### What you should not do:

You should not defer addressing the issue because you "fear consequences" , nor accept the increase in workload because you fear "consequences" ; nor should you accept the increase in workload because it provides a valuable teaching experience. Unless you have already used up all the hours you are being paid for don't stop performing  
(continued p. 3)

*By your TA  
VP at Studley*

*Christina*

*Behme*



## Time for negotiation fast approaches

### At the end of this academic year....

we will again find ourselves near the end of our contracts with the three universities. We have already started thinking about improvements to our three collective agreements. We would like to hear our members thoughts about negotiations. Our wages still rank near the bottom of all contract faculty across the country. What else would you like to see improved? *Let your executive know by email* and check out the website site [www.cupe3912.ca](http://www.cupe3912.ca) for future announcements and news.

*Childcare and Union politics : Kidco*

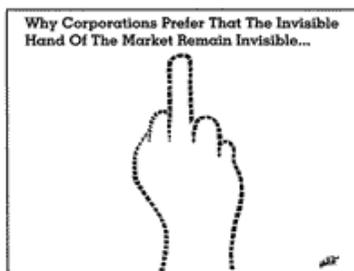
*comes to Halifax*

Kids and Company, the largest private child care chain with 24 centres across the country, has had meetings at both Dalhousie University and the IWK Children's Centre.

The union representing 11 non-profit child care centres in Nova Scotia says this is a major step backwards for the sector.

Cupe NS President Danny Cavanaugh says : "We do not want to see a large, Ontario-based corporation moving into Nova Scotia to make millions of dollars from providing more for-profit child care. Nova Scotia needs a public child care system that is founded on the 'quad' principles of quality, univer-

sal, accessible and developmental." Says Cavanagh, "Early childhood education is essential to support parents' employment and learning, and necessary in any poverty reduction strategy. For-profit child care is not the answer for working families in Nova Scotia." For more information: contact Danny Cavanagh or John McCracken at: Cavanaugh: (902) 957-0822 (Cell) McCracken: 455-4180 (o)



**Are you a TA: Know your rights ! *Continued***  
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your duties. But you may have the extra time and like the work, so in this case it should be okay to be generous, right? Not really. Keep in mind that you are being paid by the hour for a limited amount of hours. Your willingness to work longer could be used as a precedence by the employer to coerce other into working longer. Or it may prevent your department from hiring an adequate number of TAs. Our collective agreement is called 'collective' for a reason. So think about others before you offer extra work. At the very least make it clear to your supervisor that you make a personal decision which should not be used as precedence for other TA's. Also keep in

mind that your supervisor might profit in the long term more from being able to have an extra TA for the work that needs to be done. Supervisors are seldom the ones who make hiring decisions; usually they have to 'make do' with the TAs that are allocated to their course by administration. If he/she can document that one TA cannot do the work that is necessary to provide a quality education for students he/she is in a better position to ask for more TAs in the future.

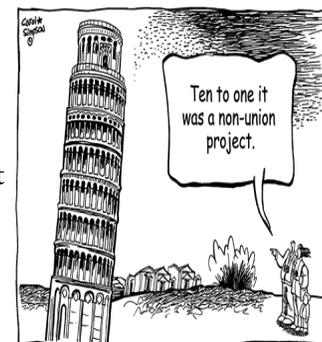


**News from around the university sector**

**Ontario College Part-time Faculty**

For three weeks in January and February, more than 3500 part-time faculty at 24 colleges voted on whether to unionize. But it seems that no matter what is done or how hard they try, part-time faculty at Ontario's Community Colleges can get no justice. For more than 30 years, the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act has forbidden part-time faculty from unionizing until the McGinty government passed Bill 90 in

2007, creating the legal framework for unionization. But to date the Colleges have used every tactic possible to disallow a counting of the votes.



**News from around the university sector**

obligations to students and therefore took that strike action. There is a lesson in the value of good organization and the commitment of the majority of their members.

**In Fear of Coordinated Bargaining**

One reason for York's refusal to budge on important issues was undoubtedly a collective concern among university administrations across Ontario: CUPE's effort to establish coordinated bargaining in the university sector. Coordinated bargaining would mean that every CUPE local of part-time or contract faculty would bargain and possibly strike at the same time. This would have increased pressure on universities to equalize wages and benefits across the sector.

**Other contract settlements**

The situation at York may have been a factor in the successful

negotiation of a contract for U of T's sessionals (part-time faculty) and TAs in early February. Their 3% plus increment in wages goes with an agreement that the Local will manage the benefits plans (UT is transferring \$2.4 million to the Union for that purpose), plus improvements in compassionate leave (1 week/academic year) and sick leave (5 days/session), pregnancy and parental leave, and increased University funding for members' childcare.

Also in early February Carleton University TAs voted 66% in favour of a new contract, giving them a 3% increase in wages but rolling back a portion of the tuition rebate grad students receive.

*R. Lanning*

CUPE 3912 has its main office at Dalhousie, on the 4th floor of Killam Library.



## Annual General Meeting—to be held at the Private dining Room SMU on April 16, at 1pm. Be there and be represented!

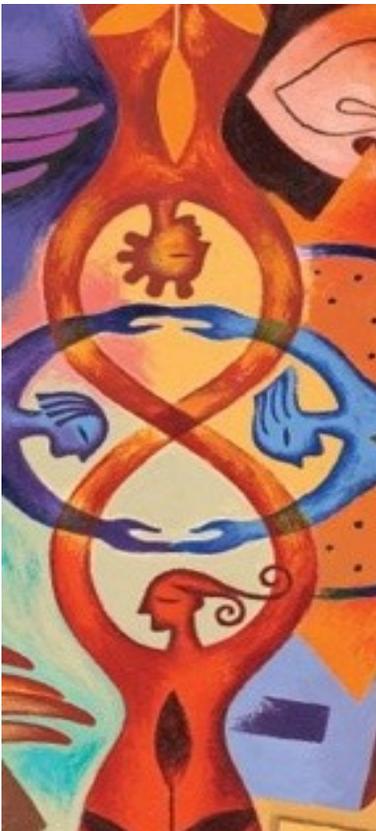
We're on the web!

[www.cupe.3912.ca](http://www.cupe.3912.ca)

Global Justice Committee Report

*Barb Moore*

The new Global Justice Committee for CUPENS intends to co-host a tour in May 2009 for union leaders from the Philippines fighting privatization. Other projects approved were Defending Human Rights in the Philippines, Building the Capacity of Human Rights Defenders from Burma, assisting our sister union in South Africa, and continuing labour support for unions in Cuba., and supporting women's maquila industries and unionism in Nicaragua and Honduras. The committee is also committed to advancing educational on the topic of Palestine Gaza and Israel. We have also developed the campaign "Footprints for Change" that connects our work for global justice to our support of public services, public water, and taking positive action on climate change.



### Notice to all the Dalhousie TAs

*T. Winters*

The local has recently hired one of our grad students to act as a TA Union Organizer. His name is Noah Mitton, a graduate student in the Industrial Engineering department. It will be his role to work in conjunction with the executive to help promote our local and to inform all of our graduate student members (TAs and Markers) about the issues we are facing. This includes upcoming issues with our new Collective Bargaining agreement. Over the next few months, Noah will be making his way to all the departments to meet with as many graduate students as possible. We are really interested in knowing what you think and are hoping to recruit TAs in every department to act as a contact in order pass along important information to other grads.

If you would like to know more, or are interested in setting up a meeting with Noah, please send him an email to: [Organizer.3912@members.cupe.ca](mailto:Organizer.3912@members.cupe.ca)  
We look forward to hearing from you.