



# ***THE INSTRUCTOR***

NEWSLETTER – FALL 2013

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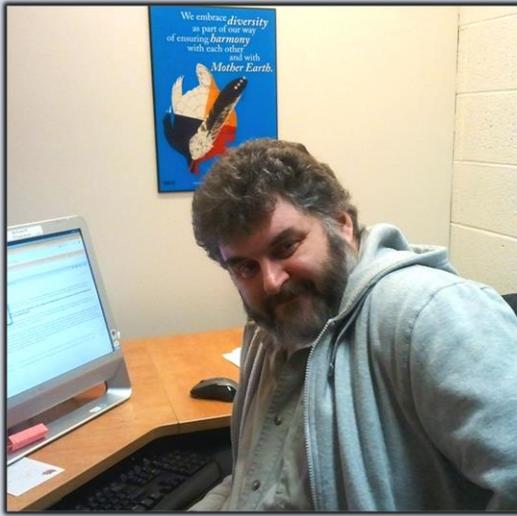
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### **CUPE General Meeting**

**Friday, November 29, 2013.  
2:00 p.m.**

**Dalhousie University, 2<sup>nd</sup>  
Floor Student Union  
Building, Council Chambers**

*Come out and support your union. Become informed of issues affecting YOUR paycheque, and get involved!*



**Greetings from the President –  
Steve Cloutier**

The first thing I should do as your new union President is introduce myself. I teach mainly in the English Department at Saint Mary's University, and occasionally at Mount Saint Vincent University. My area of specialization is Twentieth Century British Literature with a focus on radical Marxist writers, but I also study literature of war (both British and more generally). I have been on CUPE 3912's Executive for four years (two years as Recording Secretary and two years as Vice-President for SMU).

My immediate goal is to get Bargaining finished. Our timeline for Bargaining is behind where it normally is. This, in a large part, has been a result of things out of our control such as busy schedules and the like. As President, I urgently want to get Bargaining restarted. We have already

*"My immediate goal is to get Bargaining finished"...*

discussed proposed dates with the three universities, and, while I can't guarantee that we will have three newly minted Collective Agreements by Christmas, negotiations will be underway by Christmas.

I have, at present, two longer term goals. The first of which is something that past Executives have struggled with: Communication. There is often a great lack of communication between the Executive and its membership. This is especially problematic when we are in bargaining and need to ratify agreements. Part of the problem is that communication has largely been left up to the Vice-Presidents at the three universities or the

*There is often a great lack of communication between the Executive and its membership...*

Communications Officer, but, since the VPs already have a lot on their plate with grievance meetings and the like and the Communications Officer is busy with the newsletter, communication with the membership is often by necessity put on the backburner. To the end, I want to create the position of "organizer".

This organizer's sole responsibility will be to create better communication between the Executive and the Part-Time Faculty at the three universities. CUPE 3912 has already established the position of "TA organizer" to work with the TAs at Dal; the new position will focus on part-timers. In effect, we will have

two organizers: one for the TAs and one for part-timers. They will report to the Executive who then in turn will report to the membership. Some have raised concerns about the term "organizer" in relation to Labour laws and potential harassment or complaints by the Employers. I am sensitive to this, so it may necessitate a change in title to better reflect the responsibilities of that position (i.e. "co-ordinator" rather than "organizer"). Ultimately, of course, the membership will have to approve it.

The second longer term goal I want to accomplish is a change in our voting procedures. As it stands, we hold voting on a single day,

meaning that a member cannot vote if he or she cannot be

*We really need a more flexible voting procedure. Ultimately, I would like online voting, taking away the need for anyone to be anywhere at a specific time.*

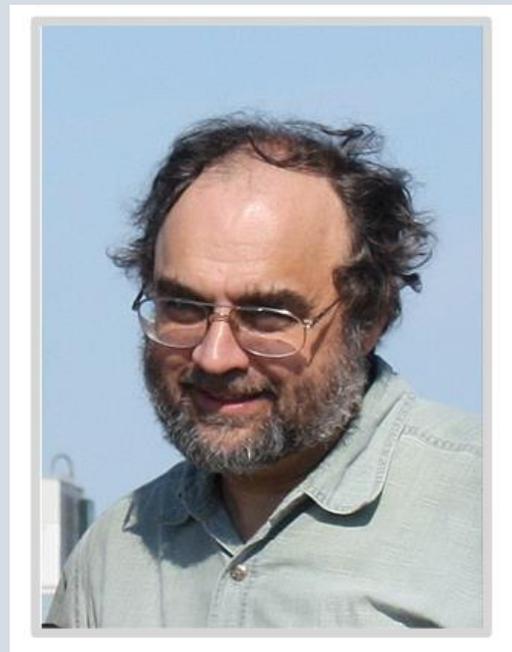
there at that place at that time. Many of us have jobs outside of the work we do at the three universities, so it is not always possible to show up for such a narrow time period. We really need a more flexible voting procedure. Ultimately, I would like online voting, taking away the need for anyone to be anywhere at a specific time. This will also have an effect on how we run our elections in that we would need to have a longer lead-in time and a more traditional "campaign" style (a process made more efficient by an organizer/co-ordinator). I have established a Committee of the Executive to look into the

issue and report to the Executive. As with the organizer/co-ordinator position, the membership will ultimately vote on the issue and shape the future of the local.

I look forward to working with you to improve the conditions and working lives of CUPE members.

*Steve Cloutier, CUPE 3912 President, November 2013*

***Greetings from VP Saint Mary's University– Phil Bennett***



I have been teaching physics and astronomy at Saint Mary's University for the past seven years, and statistics for health science students at Dalhousie. My specialty is in stellar astrophysics, in particular, the study of stellar atmospheres and winds.

I got involved in CUPE 3912 because of my growing frustration with the treatment of part-time faculty at the Halifax area universities. At SMU – and the numbers are similar elsewhere – 75% of our membership has

been teaching “part-time” for 5 years or more, and 49% have been teaching for at least 10 years, so “part-time” is a misnomer. I prefer the more appropriate term “contract faculty”. Contract faculty now teach the majority of courses in some departments. In my own department, 15 out of 21 courses are being taught by contract faculty in Fall 2013. We do this for a fraction of income received by the regular faculty, with no benefits, no pension, no job security, and with no option of career

*Because we are paid so little, universities make money from courses taught by contract faculty – our courses are “profit centres” for the university.*

advancement or path to a permanent job. We have virtually no say in

departmental or university governance, even though we carry out a large fraction of all teaching activity at these universities.

Because we are paid so little, universities make money from courses taught by contract faculty – our courses are “profit centres” for the university. In these days of contracting out cheap labour, universities don’t even have to look overseas – their cheap labour is us. A few decades ago, contract faculty were used sparingly, to fill a genuine need for short-term substitute instructors. But since then, the system has evolved so there is now an entire under-tier of semi-permanent low-paid contract faculty – all without any job security, any benefits, any pension, or any prospect of meaningful career advancement. Our jobs –by the standards of our time– are precarious. This is an intolerable situation for

this day and age that must not be allowed to continue. It is time to end this treatment of contract faculty, and my goal is to work towards that outcome.

I propose to pursue this by several means: (1) to lobby the provincial government to amend Nova Scotia labour laws to recognize repeated employment on short-term contracts to the same employer as continuous employment, (2) to launch a public awareness campaign to encourage universities to provide fair working conditions for contract faculty, and (3) to carry out collective job action as necessary to bring about this change. Although my primary focus is to represent part-time faculty at Saint Mary’s, I welcome feedback on these issues from all members of CUPE 3912. This is a discussion that we very much need to have. Most of all, I encourage all members to get involved and help us achieve these goals.

*Philip Bennett, CUPE 3912 VP (Saint Mary’s)  
Nov 2013*

### **CUPE 3912 at CUPE National Convention, Quebec, October 20 - 25, 2013**

Several members of 3912’s executive committee attended CUPE National’s Post-secondary Sector meetings on October 20th, prior to Convention, where groups from different types of locals housed in universities, across the country, discussed the corporatization of the university, the cuts to programs and reduction in number of

classes offered, the general underfunding of universities.

Students' concerns over debt cause great levels of stress and anxiety, and students who have such debts manifest lower rates of completion in our programs. Workers in the Post-secondary Sector face attacks on their wages, on benefits (if they have them, which members of CUPE 3912 do not) and in their pensions (again, 3912 lacks pensions). Increased privatization throughout the economy has dramatically affected the universities, and while governments and post-secondary institutions claim that they do not have choices in these "difficult economic times", there are choices made, and decisions are taken that affect most workers' rights, and our standard of living invariably suffers. However, Northern European countries do not charge tuition fees, and other countries charge minimal fees. Our government has choices. In fact Newfoundland and Labrador have chosen to make higher education more affordable, freezing fees at 1996-1997 levels. Newfoundland also has debt forgiveness as a policy for the provincial portion of a student's debt.

CUPE believes that access to publicly-provided higher education is a right, and that building and maintaining our post-secondary education systems is an urgent government priority, since higher education plays a crucial

role in the lives of persons, as well as in our economic, social, and cultural development.

Accessible higher education, provided by public institutions and supported by public funds has great potential to lessen social and economic disparities, as well as providing stable public sector jobs for many people, with consequence that benefit communities enormously.



At the Post-secondary Sector meeting, we all agreed that uniting with other unions and associations on campus is an important strategy in our common fight against cutbacks, against privatization, and against loss of programs and quality of education.

*Carmel Forde, CUPE 3912 VP Dalhousie*

### **CUPE National Convention and the National Environment Committee**

I have served on this national committee for nearly four years, and have worked with other members of the committee from other provinces and sectors to develop the National Environment policy. In 2011, CUPE National adopted a resolution to develop a national

environment policy, and to work through education programs to education CUPE members about climate change, and how it affects workplaces and communities. The National Environment Policy was adopted by National Executive Board in March 2013, and this National Convention in Quebec City 2013 was the first convention to have Green Stewards, staff that volunteer to communicate individually with members throughout the days of the convention on environmental concerns.

CUPE National Environment Committee recommends actions that CUPE National, and its locals, can take to cut GHG emissions that cause climate change, and we monitor government and international agencies climate change policies, programs and actions. In 2013 CUPE ran an Environment Workshop at the Occupational Health and Safety Conference, in February, in Ottawa. During this convention, we not only coordinated with the Green Stewards, but also ran an Environment booth, which was very busy throughout each day of convention.

CUPE National Conventions are offset through carbon offset purchases made through projects with Carbon Zero in 2011, whereas in 2013 we've worked out a project portfolio through our own investigations.

*Carmel Forde*  
*CUPE 3912 VP Dalhousie*

## **Nova Scotia Federation of Labour Convention, Halifax Westin Hotel, October 2013**

Larry Haiven, from the School of Business at SMU, gave a talk at the Nova Scotia Federation of Labour convention, this week at the Westin hotel. His focus was on Workers Action Centres. These centres are crucial components of a democratic society which is concerned about the living standards, and the working conditions, for workers who have no unions at their workplaces.

Workers Action centers have been established in various constituencies around Canada for some years, and they provide service delivery, advocacy, and organizing. The services offered include legal and paralegal advice on unpaid wages, for example, immigration information and aid, WCB help and other services. By way of research and releasing exposes, the Centers provide advocacy, they also lobby for changes to existing legislation, and for new laws, and they bring suits against employers on behalf of workers who have no affiliation with a union proper. They improve monitoring and they aid in a grievance process for such workers. In their Organizing function, workers centers build ongoing organization and engage in leadership development. This is one of the most important functions of workers centers.

Halifax Media Coop, who have the mandate to build a democratic media, also gave a great presentation. They started in 2008 and now have four chapters across the country. The friendship with Labour is developing, and it is this relationship that was one of the elements under discussion at the Convention.

Miles Howe and his colleagues from the Halifax Media Coop have sided with Unions during the Baristas Rise Up campaign at the JustUs Coffee Shop, and with the First Nations people at Rexton. Miles spent the summer at Elsipogtog, and has written extensively on First Nation experiences with police over fracking protests. See the links below for more information on Halifax Media Coop's coverage of these events.

To return to the Baristas' Campaign, JustUS had been one of the Coop's principal donors, and since these donors no longer provide funds for the Coop, because of the support the Coop has given to the Baristas, our convention was told that the Nova Scotia Federation of Labour, and the CLC have decided to donate 20,000 each year, to the Coop, to facilitate their operation, and provide funds. The NSFL challenged their locals to donate, also, to the Coop. Hopefully the Coop will soon see increases in their funding.

<http://halifax.mediacoop.ca/story/was-fix-mikmaq-warriors-elsipogtog/19441>

<http://aptn.ca/pages/news/2013/10/21/elsipogtog-regroups-chief-ponders-new-anti-fracking-leadership/>



Delegates at the CUPE National, Quebec City

**Obituary for CUPE 3912 member Dr. Katherine Clough, part-time instructor at Dalhousie University.**

*"...To all who knew her, Katherine was a brilliant, vibrant, social, resourceful and thoughtful woman who took great joy in all aspects of learning and exploring the world around her..."*

For full obituary, please follow link:

<http://thechronicleherald.ca/obituaries/116516-2-clough-dr-katherine-s>

**Obituary for CUPE 3912 member Dr. Jennifer Grabove, part-time instructor at Mount Saint Vincent University**

*"...She will be missed by her colleagues who describe her as an enthusiastic and dedicated teacher, a congenial and generous colleague, and a wonderful person."*

For full obituary, please follow link:

<http://3912.cupe.ca/2013/09/17/death-of-jennifer-grabove/>

