

AUNBT President's Report

December 2009 Information Meetings

Founded in 1956, the Association of University of New Brunswick Teachers was certified as a trade union for full-time academics thirty years ago and for contract academics in 2008. Here are some of AUNBT's characteristic features.

- AUNBT is a volunteer organization. Many faculty unions of our size, or even much smaller (eg, Mount Allison), employ a permanent "professional officer" to whom day-to-day activities are delegated. To this point AUNBT has thought it better that the affairs of the membership be in the hands of knowledgeable, engaged volunteers.
- AUNBT's full-time unit is not growing. For 30 years membership has hovered about the 600 mark (currently 586) and there is no reason to anticipate near-term growth. We believe that the part-time unit may contain 400+ members within a given 12-month period but, lacking a collective agreement, we do not know for sure.
- Because membership in the full-time unit has been nearly static for 30 years, AUNBT's dues revenue is easily predicted and, subject to general pay rises, essentially fixed. On the other hand, expenses are prey to extraordinaries, most recently actuarial services (regarding the pension plan), bargaining costs and a retirement allowance for a long-serving AUNBT employee, off-set somewhat by reductions in legal retainer and FNBFA dues charges. When the books for 2009 are closed, expenditures will reflect the Executive's considerable success in trimming ordinary expenses. Backstopping our annual operating budget are sizeable financial reserves.
- AUNBT leadership continues in generational change. With the recent departures of Robert Breen, who became our legal counsel during the struggle for unionization in 1978-79, and Sonja Breau, who served in the Fredericton office for nearly 30 years, nearly all of those present at the unionization of the Association have left the organization.
- AUNBT continues to have productive relations with the UNB Administration. These are always vulnerable to the arrival from elsewhere of senior administrators unacquainted with and uninterested in local culture but eager to prove their mettle through experiments in aggressive managerialism. The Fall issue of **Interesting Times** noted the quarter-century that had passed since AUNBT and the Administration disagreed so sharply as to give rise to an arbitrated grievance. Ironically, the Grievance Committee has since given notice to arbitrate a denial of tenure decision, which will be heard in 2010.
- Little of AUNBT's work with the Administration is visible. On an almost daily basis we intervene with or are consulted about individual situations.

When we see the Administration going astray on broader issues, such as entering strategic planning while apparently ignoring the central role of the senates and their planning committees in matters academic, we try to see that they put the situation right. AUNBT's standard operating policy is not to blast the Administration publically without first calling attention to the situation confidentially. Usually this works. In mediating the relations of Administration and AUNBT in recent years, the university secretary has sometimes played a useful role; as with many at UNB, we are sorry to see Stephen Strople leave that position.

- AUNBT's awareness of and participation in the larger provincial, Canadian and international higher education issues of our time is chiefly via alliance with other faculty associations participating in the Canadian Association of University Teachers (joined 1956), the Federation of New Brunswick Faculty Associations (founded 1970) and the CAUT Defence Fund (joined 1980). Apart from missing FNBFA's 2-day retreat owing to illness, I was able on our behalf to participate in all of these organizations this year.

Although much of what AUNBT has done since the annual meeting in April has been overshadowed by the odyssey of collective bargaining (or lack of bargaining), the routine business of the Association, including regular meetings with president, provost and vp-Saint John, has been carried on.

It is a pleasure to acknowledge the role of the 19-member Executive committee in superintending the affairs of our collective enterprise, the arduous labours of our two collective bargaining teams, the busy and efficient work of Richard McGaw as grievance chair of the full-time unit and the conscientiousness of Brenda Arbeau in keeping the Fredericton office running smoothly.

These notes on AUNBT have been retrospective. At the Information Meetings I will speak of challenges ahead.

David Bell
November 2009