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Room D472
 ULFA Website: <http://ulfa.ca>

PRESIDENT'S KICK-ABOUT

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 Steve Ferzacca
 Anthropology/2489

President
 Ilsa Wong
 Kinesiology/2232
 Secretary/Treasurer

VP/President Nominate
 Vacant

Secretary-Treasurer
 Ed Jurkowski
 Music/2342

Academic Welfare Chair
 John Usher
 Management/2759

Economic Benefits Chair
 Marc Roussel
 Chem/Biochem/2326

Grievance Chair
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 Leah Fowler
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ULFA OFFICE/2578

Brenda Rennie
 Executive Officer

Norma Gibbon
 Administrative Assistant



As the semester winds down, ULFA has been active in a number of areas that should interest the membership.

Firstly, with the assistance of CAUT legal counsel, ULFA has recently filed a policy grievance against the University in an effort to protect both the academic freedom of our members and the roles of Chairs in academic units. As a result of a recent Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP) request submitted to the University, some members of ULFA were asked to provide documents to the

University's FOIP Officer for potential submission to the Privacy Commissioner. The FOIP Act stipulates that documents under the "custody or control of a public body" are to be collected however, ULFA contends that before any such documents are to be provided, we must first come to some understanding of what constitutes "in the custody" or "under the control." That question speaks to the substance of our grievance and we look to the recent University of Ottawa decision (reported in the recent November 2008 CAUT Bulletin) as support for the need for some understanding regarding "custody or control".

You have received notification of the launch of the new ULFA website (www.ulfa.ca) and hopefully you have had an opportunity to test out the site. All ULFA business such as questionnaires, report releases, and news, will be handled through this

site and we will no longer host a site on the U of L servers.

The Salary Equity Report was the first major business to be released through the website, and to provide the Membership a chance discuss the report, a Town Hall meeting was held on November 20th, 2008. A small group of Faculty and Administrators quizzed the Salary Equity Committee on issues dealing with census and sample data, intra-Faculty anomalies, and where we go from here. ULFA wishes to acknowledge the time and efforts of its members of the committee: Muriel Mellow (co-Chair), Michelle Duke, Debra Basil, and Ilsa Wong.

ULFA welcomed a number of recently hired Faculty members to its New Faculty Reception in November. The event was a great opportunity for Executive to learn more about their first few months on campus, and for those who attended to fill us in on any questions that they may have.

Since the Fall General Meeting, Marc Roussel (Chair-Economic Benefits), Steve Ferzacca (Past President), Brenda Rennie (Executive Officer) and I have been working on numerous By-Law changes recommended by Marcus Harvey from the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT). This is the first full review of the By-Laws that has been carried out and there will be quite a few changes coming forward for approval at the Annual General Meeting in the Spring.

Executive has recently named its Ad-Hoc Committee to begin discussions in January about membership in ULFA, with the Administrative Professional Officers' (APO) Ad-Hoc Committee. John Usher (Chair – Academic Welfare), Marc Roussel, Steve Ferzacca and I will represent ULFA.

Finally, the Executive wishes you a safe and joyous holiday season and reminds you that classes do not begin again until January 07, 2008.

**Ilsa Wong [ilsa.wong@uleth.ca]
ULFA President**



MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL ...

We extend Seasons' Greetings to each of you and your families, and wish you the best in the coming year.

The University **Festive Reception** is scheduled for
Wednesday, December 17th,
3:30 to 5:30 p.m. in the University Hall Atrium.
Our office will be closed for the holidays
Monday, December 22nd through to
Monday, January 5th 2009.

DON'T BE A SCROOGE . . .

Please give generously this holiday season to those less fortunate by donating to the local food banks.
A financial contribution or food donation would be greatly appreciated.

University of Lethbridge Students' Union Food Bank
Lethbridge Food Bank 1016 – 2 Avenue South
Interfaith Food Bank 1116 – 3 Avenue North
Lethbridge Soup Kitchen 11 07 - 2nd Avenue North

Report on the CAUT Health & Safety Conference November 7-9, 2008 (Ottawa)

The conference opened on Friday afternoon with a Keynote Address by Dr. Tony Mazzulli (Mt. Sinai Hospital, Toronto) on the aftermath of the SARS epidemic, and its relevance for pandemic planning and emergency preparedness in the workplace. Much of the talk focused on the 2003 SARS experience in Toronto, which was the largest such outbreak in the world. In the larger context, Dr. Mazzulli emphasized that the SARS outbreak was a wake-up call for everyone: infectious diseases and viruses are here to stay, and will, for the foreseeable future, represent a formidable threat to human life and health. He noted on multiple occasions during his talk that whereas the mortality in the SARS outbreak was about 11%, the mortality for the pandemic is predicted to be about 60%. And he emphasized that the only question is when the pandemic will strike, not if. Two very important lessons were learned from the Toronto SARS outbreak: (1) information was critical, to avoid rumours and unnecessary fear, and (2) health care workers didn't understand disease risk and transmission (apparently proper hand washing hygiene had not been routinely taught in Toronto area nursing schools). In terms of preparing for the coming pandemic, he noted that we don't know when it will strike, what strain of virus will be responsible, how infectious it will be, or how virulent. He did predict the attack rate will be about 30% (compared to 10% for ordinary flu), and that absenteeism might be as high as 40%. There may be a problem with health care workers not showing up for work, and some jurisdictions may be considering or already have legislation to deal with this problem. As with the 1918 pandemic, mortality will be particularly high in the workforce, with the mortality highest in those between 15 and 45 years old. This will of course have major implications for pandemic planning. In reviewing the lessons learned from the 1918 pandemic, Dr. Mazzulli noted that non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPI) may play a role, especially in view of the limited supply of anti-viral drugs, and the time-delay in developing effective vaccines. In this regard, he noted that in comparing the death rates in Philadelphia and St. Louis, the latter city fared much better simply because they closed public gathering places (parades, schools, sporting events, etc.) ***[Given the importance of information, it would seem that in developing our university's pandemic planning, we should make every effort to do this in public. We should as soon as possible develop an effective website describing our plan, as have a number of other Canadian universities. ULFA can and should play a preeminent role in ensuring that this plan and website are completed in the most expeditious and effective manner possible. A sub-committee has already been formed to advise our JWSHSC on pandemic planning.]***

The keynote address was followed by a panel discussion on occupational cancer featuring Jim Brophy (Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers), Dr. John Ruckdeschel (Director, Karmanos Cancer Clinic and Co-Director National Center for Vermiculite and Asbestos Related Cancers), and Ruth Grier (Former Ontario Minister of Health and Minister of the Environment). What followed was, at least for me, a very shocking and sobering introduction to the fates of workers needlessly and knowingly exposed to carcinogens in their workplace. In introducing the panel, Laura Lozanski identified a number of issues of concern for faculty. One is the very long latency period in the case of asbestos-related illness like mesothelioma. In addition, there appears to be some evidence for a rise in illnesses in Fine Arts departments, via exposure to silica, dyes, and lead.

Jim Brophy noted that there are some 216 known mammary carcinogens, and ventured the opinion that perhaps only 50% of breast cancers are due to genetic or lifestyle factors. The other 50% are most likely due to exposure to environmental carcinogens, and as an example, he pointed to the elevated risk in women over 55 who had worked on farms, especially as children on the family farm. Dr. Ruckdeschel emphasized just how nasty a disease mesothelioma is, with a very long latency period, in excess of 40

years, and a very poor chance of cure once detected. He noted that asbestos used to be required for coating of heating ducts and steel, and for this reason, is probably in every building in Canada and the U.S. built before the code was changed. This includes most universities in Canada. For our grandchildren, we should be able to eliminate environmental asbestos, but he noted because of the long latency period, we'll still be seeing asbestos-related diseases for a long time yet. Ruth Grier noted that exposure to pollutants and carcinogens is not voluntary, and drew attention to the "Right to Know" bylaws now being considered by a number of municipalities in Canada requiring industries to report to city councils documenting exactly what they use.

In the questions session that followed, Laura noted that most employers don't know the hazards. One panel member noted that while the Canadian government is spending billions of dollars removing asbestos from the Parliament buildings, it has helped to scuttle an international ban on the production and sale of asbestos products: it would seem impossible to reconcile this contradiction.

Saturday morning, Laura introduced the panel members for a discussion of workplace chemicals and occupational disease: Andy King (Director, Health & Safety, United Steelworkers) and Rachel Massey (Toxic Use Reduction Institute, Lowell Centre, University of Massachusetts). For the second time, Laura mentioned some evidence for clusters of cancers in Fine Arts departments as something we should keep in mind. ***[It would seem our ULFA reps on the JWSHSC should follow up on this.]*** A central theme running through Andy's presentation were the interests that industrial workers and university faculty have in common: we are affected by the same chemicals in our workplaces. He noted the history of labour activists and researchers working together to remove toxic chemicals. He noted the recent "Right to Know" legislation coming into effect in Ontario, and that the the Ministry of Health in Toronto supports this legislation requiring companies to report what chemicals they use. Historically, he emphasized the undeniable fact that if industries don't pay a cost, they'll do absolutely nothing. He concluded by expressing his hope that labour, environmentalists and academic researchers will be able to form an effective alliance to reduce the use of toxic chemicals and to mitigate their effects.

Rachel described the implementation and effectiveness of legislation in Massachusetts requiring companies to report details on the toxics they use, and where they all end up. The legislation also requires they develop a plan wherever possible for the use of alternatives to toxic substances. She discussed data (available on their website www.turadata.turi.org/ which shows that the program has led to a significant reduction in the use of toxic chemicals. Overall, most companies have actually saved money, both by identifying waste in doing their toxic chemical inventory, and through better management. The pleasant surprise for many companies was that the reporting and planning requirements of the program contributed to cost savings. Rachel concluded with three highlights. First, having made a plan for the use of alternatives, most companies carry it out, especially when they identify anticipated savings. Second, most companies actually do save money, exclusive of any health benefits. And third, Rachel noted that toxic use reduction techniques pioneered by her institute are now being disseminated outside Massachusetts.

Saturday afternoon began with an interesting session on "member to member" conflict given by CAUT Legal Counsel Mariette Pilon. She emphasized that actually such workplace conflicts are really something the employer must take responsibility for and resolve. Ultimately, the employer is responsible for ensuring a safe workplace, and in particular, for establishing and supporting an environment where such conflicts do not occur. This session was followed by one on Workplace Mental Health, given by Renee Ouimet, Director Capacity Building and Education Division at the Ottawa branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association. She noted that 1 in 5 Canadians will experience depression and anxiety at some point in their lives, and because of the enormous social stigma attached to mental illness, 2 out of 3 won't seek help. The fact that mental illness is so widespread, and that so many mentally ill workers remain in the workplace, is forcing employers to recognize and deal with mental illness. In Europe, Renee pointed out that organizations that don't take care of mental health hazards can be fined. She also noted that many managers have little or no training in dealing with mentally-ill subordinates, and she noted that guidance on finding such help and training can be found at the website:

After a break, the Saturday sessions closed with a brief address by Anthony Pizzino (CUPE National Director of Health & Safety) on Workplace Harassment. He noted that harassment goes under many names. As an example of leadership in developing legislation, he pointed to Quebec as the first jurisdiction in North America to include protection in its Labour Standards Act against psychological harassment of workers. He noted that JWSHSC and unions need to be involved in the development of effective “no bullying” and “no harassment” policies.

The last session on Sunday morning opened with a presentation by Dr. Magda Havas (Centre for Health Studies, Trent University) on electromagnetic fields as an emerging threat. Although I found the subject of her talk most interesting, I could not in all honesty gauge the level of the threat we actually face from her talk. Dr. Havas’ presentation for the most part focused on the bioeffects of exposure to WI-FI and wireless, but again I could not discern whether such effects are well recognized in the scientific community as a significant hazard. She did point to a Royal Society of Canada study which did attempt to finger some of the underlying mechanisms for the biological effects of these fields, and no doubt there is a need for more fundamental work in this area by biophysicists and biologists. Dr. Havas suggested interested faculty consult the website www.bioinitiative.org where a rationale for a biologically-based public exposure standard for electromagnetic fields is discussed. As a measure of how seriously this threat is being taken by some universities in Canada, Dr. Havas noted that the President of Lakehead University is apparently making every effort to minimize exposure of faculty and students to WI-FI.

Valence Young from the Elementary School Teachers Federation of Ontario then gave a sorry tale of her experiences with asbestos and asbestos removal in a school. She wanted to use her talk to emphasize, that in her opinion, workplace health and safety has and will be about power in the workplace. By the end of her talk, it seemed she had hit the nail on the head based on her experience. Valence also conducted a survey of all the conference participants which, for at least 1/3 of those surveyed, revealed some significant problems with the effectiveness of their university JWSHSC.

Laura Lozanski closed out the conference with some thoughtful advice and recommendations for faculty associations and their JWSHSC reps. She noted that the reps do have an important role as an advocate on behalf of their associations on the JWSHSCs, and that they should take their role seriously. She recommended one way to emphasize the importance of these reps is to make them a part of the faculty association Executive, pointing to Brandon University as one example. At the very least, she recommended that the reps be given an opportunity to report back to the Executive at least once a year. In addition, she suggested that elections should occur at a faculty association meeting with minutes – if necessary, such minutes can be shown to a provincial inspector. In many cases across Canada, she noted that some reps don’t even know their role, and quite often, there is no reporting back to the membership by reps. ***[It would seem one way to solve this is to use one of the ULFA meetings to give the rep a chance to give a public report, as we do now with other committees. If we don’t take health and safety seriously, why would we expect our employer to do so? Making the rep a member of the Executive would seem to be another excellent way to send a strong message to the membership and to the Administration about our priorities.]*** Laura noted that in some universities, department Chairs have been asked to act as Health and Safety supervisors, when in fact they often don’t have any training to act in this capacity. Laura said there is now a CAUT Ad-Hoc committee working on this issue.

NOTE: For those interested, copies of all material made available to conference participants has been deposited in the ULFA office (D-472).

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