

# Faculty Negotiations

*Faculty contract negotiations are well under way*

BY ERYN FAGAN

Faculty contract negotiations are well under way, with face-to-face talks having begun on the January 18. As the negotiations are still pending, very little has been officially disclosed yet, and apparently even most of the faculty members are unaware of the latest developments.

The Economic Benefits Committee of the Faculty Association conducts a survey of the professors around September, investigating which issues are of the greatest import among members. The Committee then uses this information to formulate a package of items which is presented to and voted upon by the faculty.

Each side of the talks, the Faculty and the Board of Governors, has a group of representatives each consisting of four "spear-throwers," including a Chief Negotiator. It is here that both sides attempt to reach some sort of consensus upon that original package. Afterwards, the job of the benefits committee is to relay these results back to the faculty and to reflect upon them as needed.

This process occurs every year, as currently the option of "multi-year indications" is not offered, according to Dr. Lawther, member of the benefits committee.

As mentioned earlier, negotiations are still standing and so much of what is being tabled is confidential. Lawther, however, did disclose a few items which have been of concern in the past.

The first of these concerns the 7.5% "claw-back" in the wages of all public employees back in 1994. Officially, what was cut was restored by the government.

But according to Lawther, many faculty feel that "restoration is not complete." This is due to inflation and a loss of economic purchasing

power, which results in an approximate loss of 5 to 6 percent.

The second issue concerns tuition waivers, or the lack thereof. This is, essentially, a reduced tuition for the children of faculty to attend UPEI. Lawther states that this benefit is roughly the norm among Canadian universities.

"A lot of us would like to have a tuition waiver," said Lawther, "It would be a positive thing."

There has been renewed interest in this issue with the high faculty turnover within the past couple of years and the inclusion of new, younger professors, he says,

and it could be a "recruitment initiative" in the future. A third incentive in these negotiations, typically, would be health plans and related benefits.

Neil Henry, Vice President of Finances and Chief Negotiator for the BOG, denied any comments at this time for the sake of confidentiality

and diplomacy.

Dr. Richard Kurial, executive of the Faculty Association and Chief Negotiator for that side, also declined comment on any of the specifics of the negotiations. He did, however, affirm that a major issue among the "list of items" would be money.

## The alternative Federal Budget Gains Student Support

BY TODD MACLEAN

Since its creation in 1995, the Alternative Federal Budget has been gaining publicity by proposing annual plans that suggest the kind of country Canadians want, as opposed to what Paul Martin may want.

In its fourth year, some of the AFB's main goals include reinvesting the national dividend back into social programs, freezing taxes at their 96-97 level, keeping the federal debt service to a minimum, reducing the official unemployment rate to at least five percent, and reducing the poverty rate to 12 percent over the next three to four years.

Since student poverty has now become a popular issue in Canada, and since the 1998 AFB is addressing this concern, many students should be voicing their support for it this year.

Adam Kenny, VP External for UPEI, says that he endorses the AFB because it follows with a lot of things that CFS demands.

"It is time for the government to start spending more money," said Kenny. "Martin cut 15 billion from the budget

last year, and wants to cut another 2.5 billion this year-- a lot of this is taken out of social programs. We should be putting more money into such things as post secondary education, while concentrating on creating more jobs with this money instead."

Kenny attended a conference last week regarding the Alternative Federal Budget, and although he himself now endorses it, the official stance of UPEI's Student Union will be determined this week. The SU will also be organizing a Student Food Drive this week, which, as Kenny says, is just an example of how severe things have become.

"It's pathetic," he said.

Mary Boyd, a representative of the AFB, and member of Action Canada Network for PEI, says that she is impressed with the amount of student voice being generated at UPEI by the student leaders.

"They are articulating themselves very well around the concerns of post secondary education," Boyd said. "[For the AFB] students can do a lot for it by spreading

awareness around campus, and by writing letters with their concerns on the national budget to the Minister of Finance."

Boyd said that there was a national poll taken years ago, which determined that the majority of Canadians favoured the Alternative Federal Budget.

"This means a lot of awareness has already been raised for the AFB," said Boyd. "The more people see these facts and figures, the more people will realize how the government is creating this useless suffering."

A nominal surplus in the billions will be accrued over the next several years, Boyd went on to say, and they want to make sure that this money is not invested where it is not needed.

"The time is now to correct the imbalance of serving the high class corporations and the wealthy," explained Boyd. "These people won't agree with our goals, because they want to keep inflation low to benefit from it. But this is not a healthy economy."

With the deficit now behind us, she explained, it is now time to start putting the

money into areas where it is deserved, and this is what the 1998 AFB is addressing.

"We want a country that's fair to everyone, and this is a blueprint for a country that we can all benefit from."

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