

The Voice

OPSEU 365

November 2009

We're Back! Your Union, Your Newsletter, Your Voice

The Voice is back and ready to roar. With a new steward body, new executive and new union rep, OPSEU 365 is re-energized and ready to tackle the next round of bargaining.

The newsletter's mission is to build solidarity and make a stronger union. This is a beta- version to get the ball rolling. We need your help: anything that motivates, informs, amuses or educates members is welcome.

You can send an original article, ballad or cartoon.

You choose!

As with everything in the labour movement, *The Voice* needs participation.

Contributions about issues that allow us to come together and move forward (think in terms of health and safety, workload, contracting out, pension etc.) are especially welcome.

It's your forum, and if there's something we need to know, send a submission to opseu@trentu.ca.

Message from the President

--Rosemary Dunford

The Executive is excited and re-charged. We have come through a difficult time and are stronger for it. After the Annual General Meeting, every single committee is full. This has not happened in years. This is fabulous: members are engaged!

Thanks to everyone who got involved. And we have to become even more engaged. Keep your eyes and ears open to make sure your department is following the Collective Agreement. Watch for (and document) issues about workload and contracting out to students. We need this information both to help you and for our bargaining.

In fact, start thinking about demands for the next round of bargaining. The Demand Set meeting will be in late February.

First year enrolment is up and Bonnie Patterson is gone. Her shadow remains, but President Franklin has indicated a different direction. We hope his actions are as positive as his words.

We are only as strong as our membership is. Get more involved. Even at the best of times, we have only had a Collective Agreement because we stood together and fought for it.

Contact your stewards or Exec. Submit something to this newsletter. Keep a close eye on your department. Think of the Demand Set meeting.

And stay healthy this flu season.

The Ballad of Noel-Levitz

To the tune of "My Favourite Things" (With apologies to Julie Andrews)

They con and insult us with scam and invention / That customer service will solve Trent's retention
Weaselling Bonnie with "Isn't this funny / We'll sell you more training for buckets of money"
So now we have yoga and salsa in workshops / Holiday parties (no presents from sweatshops)
Noel-Levitz insults us, like we're all mean trolls / Who cannot smile for enrolment goals
We support students, not shoppers or numbers / Customer service: it's bogus and dumber
Than linking this training to good laws for access / But ditching this focus & wedging in some mess
Worthy of Dilbert but won't someone tell us / Since when's Noel-Levitz an expert on access?



Trent claims to be responding to legally obligatory training around powerful and important accessibility legislation, but this is used as an excuse to implement infantilizing and expensive customer service training.

Customers?

Education is not a product to consume. It blossoms in the complexity of human interactions and community. "Customers" know no community. They take. A consumer is an isolated and often alienated individual passively consuming a product.

"Hamburger U" is a sad thing to reduce the Trent community to.

What We Can Learn From Bhutan

Before being herded off to watch tacky Noel-Levitz videos—*the guy at the garbage can was friendly to campus visitors!*—Don O’Leary invoked something spooky about “competition” necessitating growth. Huh? Harvard has seven thousand undergraduates and doesn’t need to grow due to market pressures. And neither do we. Growth is a human choice, not a pre-ordained economic necessity.

We were once proud to be Canada’s Outstanding Small University, a reputation that still attracts students. Smoke-and-mirrors about market pressures is akin to worshipping the GDP and growth at all costs. But we must stop and count those costs. For example, stress leave induced medical appointments make the economy grow. Oil spills and hurricanes pump billions into the GDP. Cancer, coffin sales, and peep shows all boost the GDP.

Savvy economists measure sustainability and well-being instead of simply looking at the limited information that comes from the GDP and economic growth. Trent might do well to reflect upon this. Bhutan measures quality of life through a Gross National Happiness Index. This and similar indices look at life beyond the bottom line. Given that Trent’s mission statement is to help students think critically and make a difference in the world, we should walk the walk and *think* before simply capitulating to the “marketplace” or to any other external whims.

We were told in the same meeting that students rank athletic facilities highly in their university choices even if they do not use them. Health facilities are intrinsically a great idea, regardless of what polls say. What if new surveys indicate students value something else before the complex is finished? Does Trent convert it into a coffee house, spa or post-modern rumpus room? Or do we keep it as an athletic complex because this is, fundamentally, a darn good idea that contributes to the well-being of our community?

We have so much collective wisdom, institutional memory and passion in this remarkable institution. We need to regain the confidence (and have leadership that shares this confidence) to trust ourselves and not desperately lunge after what market researchers and other outsiders dictate. Perhaps President Franklin’s integrated planning project will look inside Trent for answers instead of quickly capitulating to market blips, polls, government policy vacuums and American consultants.

Can we live up to our own ideals? Let’s think critically and make a difference in the world.

Like Weekends? Thank Unions!

Weekends, like health care, pensions, health and safety legislation and the eight hour day were fought for by unions.

Some may take these things for granted today, but nobody gave workers these rights. They were fought for.

If we forget this important lesson of history, we may become complacent and risk losing what a long history of solidarity and struggle have accomplished.

Unionized workers make more money than non-unionized workers. Statistics Canada notes that that 83% of unionized employees have a pension compared to only 33% of non-unionized workers.

Think of that, or dentist bills, the next time somebody gripes about union dues.

It's a small price to pay for what we gain.

Non-unionized workers are at the mercy of bosses. They face managers alone.

Unionized workers have a clear process for handling complaints and grievances in a timely, transparent and fair way.

It is significant that the most unionized country in the world, Sweden, is consistently at the top of the United Nations quality of life index.

The eight hour day (7.5 in our case), health care, weekends and pensions were never granted without a struggle.

Remember this legacy, and honour it as we continue the fight for respect in the workplace.

This newsletter is put together by your communication committee, Dana Capell, Christine Diaz and George Fogarasi. Please send your submission to opseu@trentu.ca.

