

IT'S MORE THAN A MATTER OF REPRESENTATION

This motion, if passed, would cause a drastic change in the operation of the Union as a whole and would, particularly, change the working relationships of our three elected full-time employees. There has not been any indication given by those in favour of the motion that our present arrangement is inadequate or that the proposed arrangement will noticeably improve the management of our union.

I am not at all opposed to changing facets of our union organization to further enhance the efficiency with which members are served, but such a profound change as this must be affected only after careful consideration of all consequences, and only with the full knowledge that such a change will result only in improvements for members of the union. I feel that this motion does not assure us many improvements. In fact it does not seem to assure us any improvements at all, and for this reason it would be foolhardy to consider making such a change in our bylaws. I am urging all members to vote against the motion.

Philip Hall
member, AUCE Contract Committee

I am opposed to this motion, which would combine the position of President and Union Organizer, for several reasons. In my experience of working full time in the Union Office there have been occasions when it was most helpful to have some one outside of the office, who was also very conversant with the affairs of the Union, available to diffuse difficult situations.

I am thinking back specifically to the first year that I was in the position of Secretary-Treasurer. The Executive was not a group that worked well together and there were enormous problems in getting decisions made and getting the work accomplished. There was also apparent distrust and some suspicion of any opinions held by the Union Office staff. This was unfounded but very difficult to deal with in trying to do our jobs effectively. Having a President outside of the office gave us someone to turn to who was in a position of responsibility, knowledgeable about our jobs and the affairs of the Union, who could and did, diffuse a lot of the difficulties.

Presently, we have a group of people who work well together both in the office and on the Executive and things run quite smoothly (that is not to say we don't have differing opinions but that we are able to make well considered decisions). There is no guarantee that this will continue and we have to think of what problems a change in structure might create.

I feel that our present structure does cause a lot of confusion and unnecessary grief for the office staff but I think there are better ways of solving those problems.

I agree that Fairleigh Wettig has handled the Presidency well. My concern is not with Fairleigh but with what will happen to the Union in the longer term. I don't think we should establish a structure that will further muddy the waters and will depend very heavily for success on the personalities of the people involved. I think many of the difficulties arise because the office staff are both employees and managers of the Union at the same time. It seems to me to make more sense for the full time officers to be handling the day to day business of the Union and to be researchers, advisors, etc. to the Executive and the membership.

The title of Union Organizer is unclear. However, there are titles other than President that would not have such an immediate connotation of centralized power. If you, the membership, want the Union run by the office staff then you should give the office staff the authority, the title and the salary appropriate to that structure. If not, then let's not create a potential for further confusion but more clearly define the role of the staff and the Executive in this organization.

Patricia House

Secretary-Treasurer

I think that those who are putting forward this motion have misunderstood, or exaggerated the role of the President. The only argument that they have made with which I have trouble disagreeing, is the argument that the President of the Union needs to be accessible. But to whom does the President need to be accessible, and why? The day to day servicing of our members is the work of the full-time paid officers. If a member has a problem with the University, a problem arising from a breach of our contract, she generally calls the Union office. The only time it would be necessary for her to call the President, is when the problem is with the Union office. And as for public relations — another concern of the movers — the only time it is necessary for the President to involve herself, is when it is a question of formal relations with the Board of Governors, or the President of the University, where protocol, as I have recently learned, makes certain demands. Public relations is written into the by-laws as a duty of all three full-time paid officers.

The President's role, as I see it, is to act as the nominal head of the union. Somebody has to be at the top. But it's not lonely there. The President's position is a potentially powerful one, but it is ultimately a very limited power. The President, after all, has only one voice on the Executive, and her power is held in check by the other officers. At the same time, she acts as a check on them. It seems to me that this division of power is essential to the maintenance of democracy. The position of President is one of the three most critical, non-staff positions available to rank-and-file members. The other two are Chairperson of the Grievance Committee, and Chairperson of the Contract Committee. As things stand right now, the duties of all three of those positions are being performed by the paid staff in this office. So, in effect, by voting for this motion, you would only be formalizing a development that has already taken place. But I don't see it as a healthy development. It would be far wiser for us to work to correct his imbalance, to put some of the responsibility back on the shoulders of the membership where it belongs. We shouldn't be reducing the possibility for active, critical participation on the part of our members.

One last point. The President is a visible, public figure, and should indeed be cognizant of all aspects of our Union membership, as well as the larger labour movement in general, as Adrien has said. But our President doesn't have to achieve this cognizance by attending every single meeting that occurs, internal and external. The President's knowledge of the Union, in particular, and of the trade union movement in general, should not come only from her own participation, but from the other informed members of the Executive, who report to her on a regular basis at Executive meetings. The President's major tasks, at least as I see it, are chairing our general meetings; chairing our Executive meetings, and being available to the paid staff for a fourth opinion, for moral support and, if necessary, for mediation. In my opinion, both of the former Presidents with whom I have dealt did an admirable job. We have nothing to complain about.

I should also add that I have absolute confidence in Fairleigh Wettig, and nothing I have said should be taken as a criticism of her.

Ted Byrne, Union Coordinator

IT'S A MATTER OF REPRESENTATION

Who should be representing this Union? Should it be somebody that works in the Library, or maybe somebody that works in the Hospital. What I am merely suggesting is that it should be somebody that works for the Union. I don't believe that being President of the Union is just another executive position. We all know it is more than that. It is the position of Leadership, on and off campus. Since 1974, the President of AUCE has been elected by the membership, or has volunteered to fill this prestigious post. Being paid by the University to do a job for the University, and trying to satisfy the needs of the membership at the same time is almost impossible. As I was President of AUCE for some time, I can easily say that such is the case.

A "Yes" vote will mean that the paid position of "Union Organizer" will automatically become the paid position of President. I strongly believe that this change can only be a positive step towards more effective representation. Marcel Dionne

I am seconding the motion to dispense with the Union Organizer position and alternatively make the President's position a full time paid position. I have several reasons for supporting this motion, all of which I feel are important.

A Union President's roll is by its very nature high profile, both with the University community and at times, the media. Hence the President must be cognizant of all aspects of our Union membership as well as the larger labour movement in general. This is a demanding roll and one which I feel deserves remuneration. Our President provides us with the direction we need in order to make sound judgements and decisions. If one is to do justice to the position one cannot expect to be able to also do justice to a full time job with the University. The converse is also true, if one does justice to their job with the University the demands of that job will detract from the time and energy available for their duties as President.

Should the President of our Union become a paid officer, we can reasonably expect there to be a greater degree of continuity in our Union Executive and less chance of early resignations midstream. In the past, people have found the demands of two jobs too onerous to handle. This has been unfortunate as these people have been enthusiastic and willing.

It is my opinion that the term "Union Organizer" is somewhat outdated. Certainly at the onset of our Union we were in the process of organizing but we certainly are able to consider ourselves organized and stable at this point in time; irrespective of which larger Union we may now decide to affiliate with in the future, or what directions we may opt to pursue.

For all the aforementioned reasons, I hope that the membership will take this positive step and see fit to support the motion that our By-laws be amended as proposed. I would like to see our President as a full time paid officer of this local. I feel it will work well to our advantage.

Adrien Kiernan
Dean's Office, Faculty of Medicine

I debated whether or not to submit something with this ballot. It occurred to me, that as current President, my thoughts may be perceived to be generated purely from self interest. Conversely, if I were not to make any comment at all, it may seem as though the issue isn't one I have given a great deal of thought to.

During the last ten months I have had a very unique opportunity. I have served our Local on a full time basis as Union Organizer and in addition, represented the membership as President. It has been like wearing two hats, and switching them as circumstances have dictated. There have been some very distinct advantages derived from this situation. My time spent working in the presidential capacity has, by and large, not been cumbersome. Working full time for the Union, I have had first hand knowledge of our everyday affairs. On the rare occasion when other organizations or individuals have specifically requested to be directed to our President, I have been able to pick up the phone and respond directly to their concerns. This has proved efficient and I think that it has given an impression of accessible, expeditious treatment. Our Union is currently involved in a number of grievance disputes as well as contract negotiations, not to mention the ties that we must maintain with other unions and like groups, all of which the President must be thoroughly aware. If I were not a full time officer of the Union at present, but employed by the University and voluntarily serving as President, I feel that the additional time involved in just keeping up to date with all that is happening would be almost a second full time job. I would question how effectively one could be conversant with given issues at a moment's call, without first phoning the Union office for back up information.

As I see this issue, it is one of representation. Aside from philosophical and traditional issues, our major concern should be how and in what fashion are we being represented, and how we wish to be represented in the future. Continuity in representation is important. Stability within the Executive during each term of office is essential. I truly feel that establishing the Presidency in a full time capacity will go along way in that regard. Over the years we have frequently seen resignations mid term as duties have become overwhelming to some who have served in a voluntary capacity. We are an important entity on this campus and our image as an organized and efficient organization will be very important to us in the struggles we have ahead of us.

For these reasons and others I would support these changes to our by-laws. We will not be setting up an office hierarchy, each position is equally salaried and of equal value. That is a concept that our Union has defended for a number of years. To suggest that renaming a current position would have the effect of creating an office boss, would be to suggest an antithesis of much we have supported and continue to support. Our paid officers, irrespective of their title, must always remain accountable to the members they serve. These proposed amendments will not change the President's accountability, but rather her/his accessibility and availability to the membership she/he represents.

Fairleigh Wettig
President/Union Organizer