

# NUFA NEWS



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## Which soften'd down the hoar austerity Of rugged desolation

**Lord Byron *Manfred***

*Gyllie Phillips, President, NUFA*

It's January and an icy wind blows off the lake. The dark blue of a twilight sky could not be a colder colour, and austerity is on the minds of governments, tax-payer lobby groups and university administrators. In a recent budget presentation at the CAUT Forum for Presidents (January 13-15 in Ottawa), Faculty Associations from across Canada heard the news (which wasn't really news to most of us, I'm sure) that governments are greeting the slow economy with "austerity measures" rather than "stimulus." Everyone knows "austerity" means cutting money to institutions which work for the public good, like schools, hospitals and of course universities. I think we all tend to see the idea of austerity as a kind of New Year's resolution to be leaner, do more with less, tighten our belts a little. But what if we consider the full implications of

this convenient policy buzzword? What are the sources and what are the real costs, in terms of the greater good, of this fiscal "diet"?

According to my totally superficial "research" (in the on-line Oxford English Dictionary) until the mid-twentieth-century, austerity was a primarily negative concept, unless you were from a particularly harshly disciplined or ascetic monastic order. Among other things, it described the bitter, astringent taste of unripe fruit. But during WWII, the word became associated with the heroic yet everyday sacrifices civilians were required to make in order to support the war effort, so there were "austerity buses" and "austerity clothes." Until the bad times are over, the thinking goes, we can do without the "luxuries and adornments" of ordinary life. But how does this really work when the "war" is between citizens and the faltering global

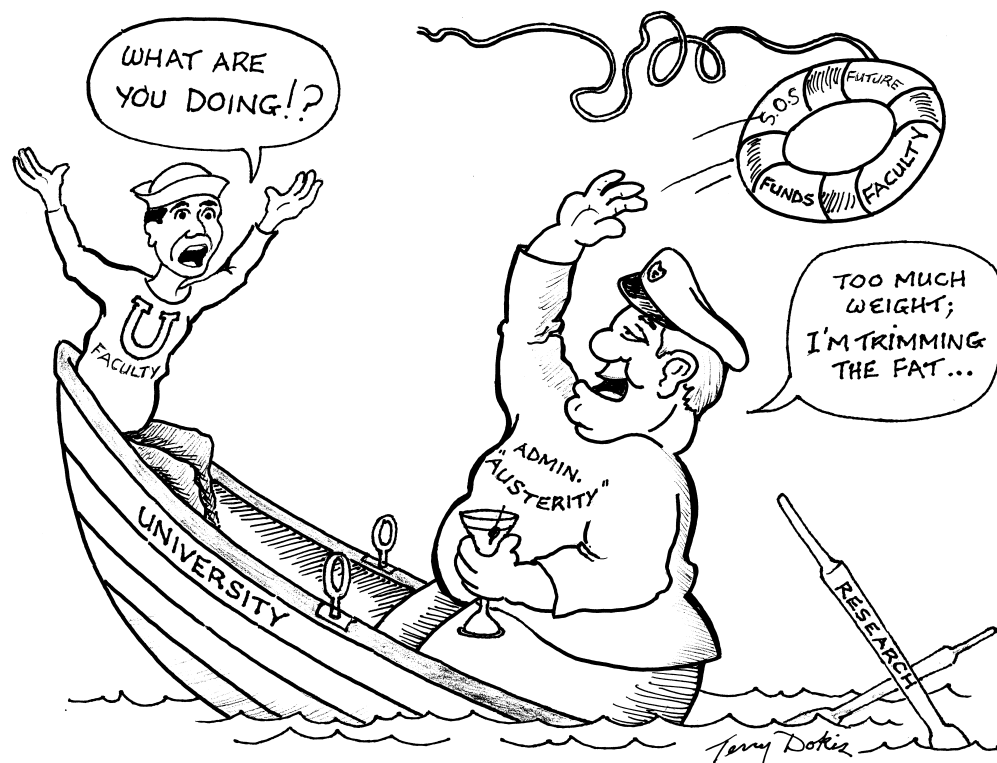
economic system, and there is no definable end point when everything will be ok? CAUT suggests that Faculty Associations have an important role to play in resisting the rhetoric of austerity on several fronts. On a broad budget level, university administrations have passed the “austerity” on from government policy discussions to program cuts in their individual institutions. We can have no control over government budgets. However, CAUT encouraged us to consider the individual financial situation of each of our universities (by no means homogenous) and especially to pay attention to the areas where we can participate in the choices our administrations make when they anticipate shrinking or static budgets. It does not follow that because the government cries poor, the university must follow suit.

A quick look at spending patterns confirms what many of us suspect: the “fat” being trimmed from the institutional waist is actually its heart—now that’s some killer liposuction. Over the last twenty years, proportional institutional spending in academic rank salaries (read: tenured or tenure-track) has declined precipitously: from almost 40%

in 1990 to 30% in 2010. Meanwhile the proportional cost of administrative and staff salaries has risen and is now almost equal to that of ranked faculty salaries. Does this mean that there are more administrators than university teachers on campuses around the country? Or that senior administration has been giving itself huge raises while expecting faculty to take increases below the cost of living? It would be exciting if I could say yes, but actually the story is more complicated. Before I explain those complications, I will add one more budget shift over the last ten years: the increasingly larger proportion of university budgets spent on capital projects.

What does all this have to do with austerity? Well, if we’re all supposed to unload the ballast to save the ship from sinking, perhaps we should pause and see what we’re tossing overboard and what we are saving. Though senior administrative salaries have risen more sharply than faculty salaries, these still constitute a relatively small percentage of universities’ overall budgets. The biggest shift is revealed by that term “academic rank salaries”. There are still lots of people teaching courses at

universities, but they are increasingly contingent, low-paid and overworked. Contract, adjunct, sessional or part-time instructors make up an increasingly larger pool of teachers in our universities. So, universities have become a lot of shiny, big buildings with fewer and fewer tenured faculty occupying the offices, the classrooms and the libraries. The heart of any university has to be the faculty—of whatever type of contract. But the soul of the university is surely the value of a sustained and free pursuit of knowledge and a long-term commitment to the firing-up of young minds through hard work and dialogue. These core values are made possible by the rights and responsibilities of tenure, academic freedom, support for research and scholarship, and faculty participation in governance. Contract Academic Staff are often disenfranchised from some or even all of these. My point is, in tough times we pull together, do without the ornaments and adornments to preserve the thing we cherish most, but when administrations or governments gradually erode the tenure system and opt for contract or teaching only positions, we don’t transform



universities, we lose universities.

The President's Forum had many other valuable topics of discussion and debate over the weekend: Balancing the Interests of a Diverse Membership, Mobilizing Members, Workload, and Teaching-only Positions, among others. All of these returned at some point to the essential function of tenure, academic freedom and the integration of teaching and research to the definition of the university. One wonders, how is Nipissing doing in regard to these challenges and questions? Is the university echoing the government call

for austerity? Are the defining elements of the university being eroded here as well? In many respects, we are doing well. This year, we are advertising *fifteen* tenure-track positions which are either replacing limited term positions or retirements and resignations. As well, more than two-thirds of our FASBU faculty are on tenure-track or tenured appointments. There has been an ongoing conversation on campus confirming the essential integration of teaching and research. In addition, our Academic Senate has recently re-affirmed the important role that CASBU members have to play in academic governance,

and the relatively new CASBU contract has some hard-won provisions for fair pay and job security for part-time Members. The NUFA Executive has been working productively and collegially with the Deans and Vice President Academic to reinforce the central academic core of our Collective Agreements. Finally, we have even made presentations to the Board of Governors, at the first regular meeting of the year and at the Orientation for new Board members, representing the essential role played by Faculty and Collective Agreements in the definition of the institution.

Much, however, remains to be seen. Our library is a fine object lesson of the stark division in academic spending priorities. It's a lovely building! It really is! But the book collections are almost comically dwarfed by the social spaces, and the cold winds are howling through the empty offices of senior library administrators. The Robert Surtees expansion, or Living Activity Centre, or whatever we call it (the New Gym), is likewise a fabulous recreational space for students, faculty and staff, but still lacks (as I understand it) the much-needed research and teaching facilities for the BPHE programme. In the yet-to-be-determined category, we await the appointment of a permanent Vice-President Academic, and we are shortly entering negotiations for a new FASBU contract. The end results of both these decision-making processes will be crucial for Nipissing's academic future. We are on the whole already a pretty lean machine, at Nipissing. We do a lot with a little; we have a high quality "product". But we will need all our collective action to ensure that Nipissing remains a robust and healthy exemplar of the real university.

Stay warm, folks.

*Note: At the time of printing, a new VPAR has been announced.*

## FASBU Bargaining Update

*Hilary Earl, Chief Negotiator,  
FASBU and Gyllie Phillips,  
President, NUFA*

The Nipissing University Faculty Association Collective Agreement for the Full-time Academic Staff Bargaining Unit (FASBU) expires April 30, 2012. The FASBU Collective Bargaining Team has been meeting regularly this past year to prepare the bargaining package for negotiations. On November 16, 2011, NUFA held a Special General Membership meeting to discuss the completed FASBU Collective Bargaining package with the membership, in preparation for the vote on the package which was scheduled for November 30 - December 2, 2011. The bargaining package was approved by an overwhelming majority of 95.7% with nearly two-thirds of the FASBU Membership voting. This represented one of the best voter turn-outs in recent history.

The positive result of the vote gave a very strong mandate to the Collective Bargaining Team as we move to the next step in the process. Our theme of "reclaiming the university" is reflected in the proposals that put teaching and scholarship at the core of the University, compensation (in all its forms) comparable to other universities, and Faculty as key stakeholders in the governance of the University. We wish to express our gratitude to everyone who took the time to attend the presentation, read the proposals and vote. Your support is not only greatly appreciated but essential.

Since the Special General Membership Meeting in November, the Collective Bargaining Committee (CBC) has met twice, once on December 9, 2011, and then again on January 6, 2012.

At the December 9, 2011 meeting we discussed and finalized our protocol for negotiations. The CBC also agreed to send notice of our desire to bargain, along with 46 dates of availability, to the Administration by December 15, 2011. On December 14, 2011, Dr. Gyllie Phillips, NUFA President, sent a notice of intent to bargain to the University President, Dr. Lesley Lovett-Doust. The

notice also contained a list of 46 dates and times from February through May in which the FASBU bargaining team is available to meet and three days proposed for a bargaining protocol meeting in January. So far, no response has been received from the administration, except for an indication that our notice has been received.

At the January 6, 2012 we discussed outstanding issues with regard to Article 25 Tenure and Promotion, Article 27 Academic Workload, and Article 35 Pregnancy Leave/ Parental Leave. Natalya Brown made a presentation on behalf of the School of Business. Before the holidays, SBE faculty had expressed concern over alternate delivery courses and work load. Brown's report recommended that alternate delivery courses be counted as part of workload. Members of the CBC agreed and changes were made.

At the time of printing, two dates have been confirmed for bargaining beginning late March, but no Protocol date has yet been set. The updated proposals may be found on the NUFA website at [www.nufa.ca](http://www.nufa.ca).

NUFA is ready to bargain. We've never been so ready!

## Wither Academic Freedom?

*Todd Horton, Vice-President,  
NUFA*

On November 25-27, 2011, I attended the annual Council of the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) as the NUFA representative. Among discussions about policy language, model language for bargaining and elections to the national Executive were a number of informative presenters on issues of import and interest to all faculty associations across Canada. One such presentation was on the topic of academic freedom, led by James Turk, CAUT's Executive Director.

For those who have only a passing knowledge of the concept, academic freedom is the belief that freedom of inquiry and scholarship by faculty and students is an essential part of the mission of the academy. It is the notion that each has the freedom to research, teach and communicate ideas, including those that are inconvenient or controversial to authorities, individuals and groups within

and outside of the university community, without fear of repression, job loss or imprisonment.

The concept evolved over many years and has been understood and applied in different ways at different times and in different parts of the world. In Canada, it slowly emerged during the interwar period in response to, among other things, the University of Toronto's displeasure at the "leftist" activities of some of its professors, most particularly Frank Underhill, one of the authors of the 1935 Regina Manifesto and co-founder of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), precursor to the New Democratic Party of Canada. The concurrent concept of tenure was borne during the war years in an effort to help solidify academic freedom as one of the cornerstones of the academy and prevent the dismissal of professors without just cause. Today both academic freedom and tenure are deeply entrenched within the Canadian university system.

That said, academic freedom remains a highly contested concept and not surprisingly there are differences in interpretation between and among faculty, administrators

and the public as to what it means in specific contexts and how it can be applied. Regardless, academic freedom at Canadian universities appears to be at risk as various forces whether by happenstance or design, change our post-secondary landscape. As universities compete for shrinking government funds administrations are keen to demonstrate all the ways that courses, programs and professors are measurably accountable for the tax dollars they receive. Likewise, as overall government funding to universities decreases and reliance on private donations increases, administrations are seeking ways to minimize controversies and promote university brands that are tailor-made for market consumption. As well, universities are expanding their program and course offerings into various professions. To do so administrations are increasingly seeking ways to adhere to regulations set by external agencies, sometimes at the expense of academic freedom. Finally, a culture of political correctness, with corresponding university policies and provincial legislation, designed to minimize (or eliminate)

individual and group offence, is putting a chill on what topics to explore and how to explore them in our classrooms. Now, let me be clear. There is nothing inherently wrong with accountability, private donations, promotion of our university and its programs, or respect for professional agencies and other external bodies. Indeed, in some cases these are critical for our functioning as an institution of learning. Further, I would be the last person to advocate for exploring a topic or issue in a way that is disrespectful to any person or group of people under some misguided notion of academic freedom. However, ignoring the way that each of these “realities” can be used to undermine and erode academic freedom in theory and practice is both a cause for concern and worthy of thoughtful discussion.

Of particular note in James Turk’s presentation, was his



dismay at the adoption of a new *Statement on Academic Freedom* by the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) on October 25, 2011. This statement makes no provision for key aspects of academic freedom, such as the freedom of extramural utterance and action as well as the right to publicly criticize one’s institution. Anyone familiar with the biography of Bertrand Russell will understand how important these freedoms are. CAUT has sent an open letter of protest to the AUCC noting the irony that on its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary it

has approved a statement that serves to “undo many of the advances achieved over the past century”. Turk also suggested we ask our university presidents how they voted and their view on the statement’s omissions.

Wither academic freedom? Perhaps, and without constant vigilance it may simply disappear. As CAUT wrote in its letter to AUCC, “a major problem in Canadian universities is not that too many people are asserting their academic freedom, but that too few are”.

*All quotes are from the CAUT Bulletin, December 2011, Vol. 58, No. 10.*

## **NUFA Learning Opportunity Awards Recipients**

This fall, NUFA recognized two students with Learning Opportunity Awards. Liam McAlear, a graduate student in Education presented a paper on “Principal Mentorship: a Look into the Literature on the Passing Wisdom from One to the Next” at the 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Values and Leadership Conference in Victoria, British Columbia in July. Liam is pursuing an MEd in Educational Leadership.

Alain Carlson, a BA student in Psychology, presented at the Children’s Mental Health Ontario (CMHO) Conference in Toronto in November. His poster presentation submission was on “An Evidence-Informed Brief Protocol for Internalizing Problems in Children’s Mental Health”.

NUFA congratulates these students for their initiative in pursuing research and learning experiences beyond those of the classroom.

The NUFA Scholarship Committee will be considering two more rounds of applications in this academic year. The next deadline is February 15 and the final deadline for the year is April 15. Awards range from \$300 to \$800. Details and applications may be found on the NUFA website at [www.nufa.ca](http://www.nufa.ca) under Forms and Applications.

## **Spotlight on Research: School of Business**

John Nadeau, PhD, is an associate professor with the School of Business. His general research interests include consumer behaviour, social

marketing, sport management, tourist behaviour and the application of place images. His experience in these areas is being leveraged into three new research programs where he is seeking (or will seek) external research funds. First, his expertise with place images and their influence on decision making will be applied to deepen our understanding of the immigrant destination selection process and the effectiveness of different attraction campaigns. This would be particularly helpful knowledge for cities like North Bay which have identified growth by immigration as a strategic imperative. Second, John's background in sport management is being used in a recent SSHRC application to examine the practice of utilizing sport as a means to enhance newcomer integration in a community and increase retention rates. Third, he is building on his sponsorship and event research program with the London Olympic Games and a recent SSHRC application to investigate the role of sponsorship in social marketing practice. Of course, the emphasis and progress on any particular research program will depend upon the ability to attract external research funds to support the work. John anxiously awaits



the results of last autumn's application season.

## ASK AN “ACADEMIC ADVISOR”

**The “Academic Advisor” answers questions related to professional academic life, providing unparalleled advice and unassailable wisdom. Please send your questions to [nufaoffice@gmail.com](mailto:nufaoffice@gmail.com)**

*DEAR “ACADEMIC ADVISOR”*

I’m thinking of using clickers in my class. Is this a good idea?

*STUDIOUS READER*

Through another kind of clicking, the “Academic Advisor” has found a study that suggests yes, this is a good idea. Clickers are said to be related to an “active learning approach” which, the “Academic Advisor” presumes, stands in opposition to not bothering to try to learn anything at all. Of these two choices, the former apparently produces better results.

Clickers are more formally known as Student Response Systems (SRS), a term that once designated ears-brains-

mouths, but, like many old systems, that one has come to be seen as rather cumbersome, or *too* active. The study specifically identifies two important benefits of SRS: first, “[w]ith clickers, students have an input device that lets them express their views in complete anonymity.” If Facebook, YouTube, and the Stanley Cup Riots in Vancouver have taught us anything – and let us hope that they have – it surely must be that people today crave anonymity. Indeed, anecdotal evidence suggests that, following the riots, participants experienced a sharp up-swing in their craving for anonymity. Second, “[c]lickers integrate a game approach.... Students of the twenty-first century have grown up using computer games.” Well, there is no denying that. Thus, if you wish to have your class contemplate the value of human life and thought, the history of violence, or issues of social justice, simply invite them point and shoot. Anonymously!

The “Academic Advisor” does feel compelled to reveal that the study found, “[c]ontrary to expectations, learning outcomes of students using clickers did not improve more than the traditional active

learning approach of using class discussion.” (The “Academic Advisor” notes the faulty logic of the comparison, but you get the point.) However, do not allow these findings to dissuade you; the author of the study certainly does not. The Conclusion: “Further research will determine whether clickers complement or surpass other active learning approaches in improving learning outcomes.” As the wording here indicates, the possibility that clickers may have no value is simply inconceivable. Good luck!

We’re ready to bargain and NUFA needs your help! Please consider filling your service responsibilities by joining the NUFA Strike Preparedness Committee (SPC). The committee is an essential component of the bargaining process since it ensures that we are serious about reaching a fair negotiated agreement. A great deal of preparation was done by the SPC for our last round of bargaining, so this year’s committee will have a strong foundation to build on. For more information or to sign up please see Angela Fera in A239, email [nufaoffice@gmail.com](mailto:nufaoffice@gmail.com) or call ext. 4499.

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