

Chair's Annual Report – November 2004

Apathy certainly takes up no habitation within hearts and minds of the PEA. This was never made more apparent with the events that unfolded around October of this year when PEA members found out that the B.C. Liberal Government had plans to divide our Union. Our Union members' immediate concern and harefooted responsiveness was what ultimately thwarted the government's misconceived and malevolent attack on yet another Union. This time it was us, our Union, just a small Union at that. A Union in its short 30 years of history has never had a conflict with government. None of that mattered, they came after us anyway. It's sort of like the behaviour that mimics that of the schoolyard bully who runs out of kids to pick on and suddenly finds yet even a smaller kid over on the swings to go after. The ending is good though, and it's a David beets Goliath and Good Samaritan story all rolled into one happy ending. Or if your Aboriginal like me, the story might be, "Coyote Takes on Bear Tricks him and Saves Turtle". Although Government Licensed Professionals were going to feel the punch of this legislation immediately, and the viability of the remaining PEA threatened later, many brothers and sisters of the PEA joined together in mass and let this government know their displeasure with their plans to divide us. It ended well for us this time. And when we have happy ending stories, we have many to thank who joined hands in solidarity during this anxious and stressful time.

A big thank you goes to all the chapter members that made their voices heard, the Association Executive members, and especially our Executive Director Jody Jensen and Staff Officer Tony Bute in our Victoria Office, and of course all the staff in both the Victoria and Burnaby offices.

When I looked back at this past year and reviewed previous years AGM reports, I realized 2004 was a very active year for us as a Union at all levels and it has a lot to do with the current political climate. A political climate that is unfavourable to Unions and our collective agreements.

Despite this climate, there are many ways that the Chapter has continued to make improvements to our working conditions and to the University community as a whole. We continue to be active at the Chapter level, the

University level, and with the Professional Employees Association (our umbrella organization) and the wider community.

At the Chapter level, currently 36 members fill 42 committee positions, including the Executive. On joint Chapter and University committees, its 22 members fill 24 positions. We have two members serving on our Association Executive and three members on Association committees.

The countless Joint Job Evaluation Committee has worked numerous hours over the past several years and their work is now coming to fruition. Our Staff Officer, Tony Bute, can speak to the details of this process.

We have our Association/University Committee that provides a forum for our Chapter to dialogue with the University administration through regular (usually monthly) meetings. During Collective Bargaining however, meetings have been put on hold. This committee discusses a range of issues involving the implementation of our collective agreement. Our agenda for the last year also included performance review, job evaluation, professional development and current PEA members of the Association/University Committee are: Tony Bute, Kim Lewall, Sheryl Karras, and myself while Phil Reusing and Steve who Gorham represent the University.

Here's a brief summary some of the events of the past year:

- December 2003 – January 2004 as the holiday season neared we were approached by the teaching assistant members of CUPE 4163 for our support in their negotiations with the University for increased wages. We did agree to support them and went on record as favouring increased wages for teaching assistants at the University of Victoria. The end results of these negotiations were that CUPE 4163 members gave 78% ratification to a proposed settlement and later expressed in

writing their gratitude for the UVic PEA's support during their negotiations with the University.

- In February we had our annual all-day Executive Retreat at the Oak Bay Beach Hotel. This retreat provided an opportunity for executive members to participate in team building exercises with the goal of forming a cohesive and confident executive. We also used this time to review our history and do some long range planning for our Chapter for the coming year. For this retreat we especially focused on bargaining as our collective agreement was ending in June, 2004.
- For February, 2004 we decided on forgoing the annual February Blues Social as a cost saving measure, but enough of our members have expressed a renewed interest in this social event that we hope to bring it back for February 2005. If we do, it will most likely be held at the University Club and by then we should have many a good reason to come together and revel in the past year's events. As in past year it's likely to prove to be a successful well attended social event. So mark your calendars, for this unique PEA social where members can enjoy each others company, good food, live music and lift one another's spirits.
- From April 30 - May 3 Provincial Job Action by the HEU arose and as strike action around the province was occurring, the PEA considered what other Unions' plans were, and the expected impact on PEA members in various bargaining units. During this time the PEA decided that they would provide strike pay to those PEA members who were kept from work due to legal picketing.
- May 28 - 29 - The PEA Convention was held in Victoria at the Delta Victoria Ocean Pointe Resort & Spa, our Chapter was well represented by eleven delegates.
- Also in May, The Association's bargaining committee was formed and includes Chair Garry Sagert (Computing), John Hall (Biochemistry), Sheryl Karras (Faculty of Business), Bert Klatt (Business Co-op), Kim Lewall (Computing), Sandra Guerreiro (Fine Arts-Theater) and Staff Officer Tony Bute. I was previously appointed to the bargaining Committee, but offered to participate as an alternate when more individuals eagerly volunteered. The committee started meeting and holding seminars in May. Bargaining between the PEA and the University of Victoria was suspended for approximately five weeks during the summer and resumed in October. With the

government's mandated 0-0-0 increases for public sector employees, they have had their work cut out for them.

At its meeting held September 13, the Association Executive established a Political Action Committee. The executive established this new, ad-hoc committee partly in response to the following resolution adopted at the Association's convention earlier this year:

"Therefore Be It Resolved that the Professional Employees Association condemns the provincial government for its attacks on workers, specifically the legislated imposition of contracts, the removal of collective agreement rights, and the negotiation of wage rollbacks and concessions on workers; and

Be It Further Resolved that the Professional Employees Association will work with other like-minded organizations to ensure that future provincial governments implement progressive labour policies."

- November 8 – Sheryl Karras, John Hall and I attended the New Employee Orientation, organized by Human Resources, and provided an overview of the PEA to our 23 new members. Peter Sanderson Executive Director for HR said that we aren't the largest Union on campus, but we certainly are the fastest growing.

In closing consider these words from our former Chair, Maggie Cooper Little

Shared at the 2002 AGM and reflect on what I have shared with you thus far:

The big issues facing the PEA during the past year are those connected with the political climate of our Province and the results of government cuts. Layoffs in government jobs have affected members in other PEA Chapters-- particularly the GLPS, and Legal Services. Although, we have not yet felt the direct result at UVic, there is cause for future concern. The layoffs during

recent months, as well as the loss of members through the decertification of certain positions, has resulted in a significant decrease in PEA membership. Reduction in services and programs is affecting us all as individuals, for example in increased costs of medical treatment, and the Chapter may need to consider these in future bargaining.

During my first year as Chair, I have been in contact with leaders of other employee and student groups on campus. I have met with President Turpin, Officers of CUPE 951 and CUPE 4163, the Employee Human Rights Committee, the Education Human Rights Committee and the Deans Council. It is all newsworthy to report, that I took extra time to meet with each of the Chapter Executive members at individual luncheon meetings. As a point of interest, our Treasurer, Vincent Connor stated, “This is unprecedented in the history of the UVIC Chapter of the PEA”.

I want to personally thank all those who contributed to the work of the PEA during the last year and thus keeping it a viable Union. Thank you to our many committee members, who carry out a wide range of functions, including representing us on University committees and at the Association level. Thank you to our Local Representatives who provide a vital link between the Executive and the membership, and are often the first point of contact for our members to utilize on Union matters. Thank you to the members who served on the Executive with me this past year-- Vincent Connor, John Foxgord, Tom Gore, John Hall, Sheryl Karras, Bert Klatt, and Morag MacNeil. I especially want to extend a thank you to Morag who had to leave the Executive early because of her secondment to the Vice President's office. We have a special gift we wish to bestow upon her as a way to express our gratitude for her service to the PEA. Thank you Morag.

A big thank you to our Staff Officer, Tony Bute, who deals with all labour/management issues affecting members, is on the Executive, the Job Evaluation Committee and the Association/University Committee.

Finally, I extend my appreciation to the membership for your continued support, involvement, and encouragement.

Wadoh/Thank you Grandfather- All our Relations

William E. Mc Ghee

Chair, UVic Chapter, PEA November 2004