

# NEWSLETTER

**McGILL ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY TEACHERS**

Vol. 25, No. 6

JANUARY, 1999

## MAUT COMMITTEE ON COLLEGIALITY

In October of 1998, MAUT formed a committee to evaluate the collegial nature of university governance at McGill, to identify some current or potential problems, and to consider some possible modifications that might be of benefit. The committee members all spoke at our conference on collegiality, and participated in a discussion period with members of the audience. Subsequently, the committee has been meeting on a regular basis. The committee members, Jane Aitkens, Malcolm Baines, Abbott Conway, Barbara Hales, Bruce Trigger, Edith Zorychta and Martin Zuckermann, will submit a report to the MAUT Council in the spring, but it may be useful to provide a general idea of the topics being considered, and some of the tentative conclusions. We have concentrated on the following four areas:

**1. University Governance.** Under the topic of university governance, our focus initially centered on the communication between the Board of Governors and the Senate, and we compared our system with the one in place at the University of Toronto, which has a single governing body. We examined the history of the system in Toronto, and received some informed opinions from colleagues who work there, and we came to the conclusion that such a change would not provide any major benefit, as the two systems basically function the same way. We are currently considering methods by which the membership of our Board of Governors might be improved. Another aspect under consideration is the relative role of the Senate versus the

Board of Governors, with respect to approval of policies and actions of major significance. Concerns about the manner in which decisions were made on the fate of the university bookstore have sensitized the academic community to any strategy by members of the university administration to circumvent the accepted routes of consultation in order to achieve a particular objective. It generates immediate concern when a Vice-Principal decides to bypass the Senate and seek approval for a policy from the Board of Governors directly. This happened in December, and was realized only in January, when MAUT and Senate learned that a "temporary" university software policy had already been brought to the Executive of the Board by the Vice-Principal Research, and approved until October 1, 1999. The approval was accompanied by the directive to "arrange for appropriate consultation to take place with the University community and for any possible amendments to be proposed."

At the Senate meeting on January 20, no urgent reason was given to explain why the policy was not first brought before the Senate for approval. The policy, in fact, is not new - an earlier version was debated and approved by Graduate Faculty Council in December of 1995. It can be easily located on the McGill website, which specifically states that it has not yet been approved by Senate or the Board of Governors. Why, after all this time, was it sent to the Board without the knowledge of Senate? Has there been a report on the policy by the joint Senate-Board

Committee on Technology Transfer? Why was MAUT not consulted, and what will happen now?

Of all the questions that were asked in Senate as a result of the Software Policy, the most important were those related to the procedure employed. This is an issue of fundamental importance. Principal Shapiro was somewhat uncertain as to the relative authority of the Board of Governors in some situations, as the university statutes are not precise in all areas. However, it is a major break with precedent to implement a policy like this first and seek approval from Senate and MAUT afterwards, particularly when no urgent reason has been provided or even implied. A similar event took place on February 3, when Senate was informed of changes in the parental leave policy previously approved by the Board of Governors.

One of the cornerstones of collegial governance is trust. Another is goodwill. Both can evaporate if the academic community begins to suspect that members of the administration are trying to implement decisions in less than an open and straightforward manner. The software policy, in various incarnations, has been around for a long time, and it may or may not require substantial modifications. That is not the point. It will form part of the Handbook of Regulations and Policies for Academic Staff at this university, and the academic staff must be confident that it was created and implemented in an open and collegial manner. MAUT has objected to these events, and has officially requested that Senate not be bypassed in this manner. We will inform our members of the outcome.

**2. Employment conditions for Contract Lecturers, and other part-time academic staff at McGill.** MAUT has been very actively involved in improving the conditions for non-tenure track academics in the past, and this is an area that needs particular attention again, for a number of reasons. To decrease cost, other universities in Quebec extensively use contract lecturers to do a large component of the university teaching, and their salaries and working conditions are considerably below those

of the regular academics. McGill has not had a policy of dealing with budget cuts in this manner, but we nevertheless need to find out if there has been a significant change in the number of people employed in this category since we conducted our last survey, or if there have been changes in their conditions of employment. We also need to examine the category of Assistant Professor, Special Status, which is increasingly being used in some faculties. We have therefore decided to reactivate a Non-tenure track committee, with Malcolm Baines as chair.

Our Constitution was amended in 1996 so that all academics, regardless of their official designation by the university, or the fraction of the time they were employed, could join MAUT and benefit from all of our services, as well as from associated membership in CAUT and FQPPU. This action followed the highly successful efforts of a special MAUT committee as well as a joint MAUT/University Administration committee to improve the situation of non-tenure track academic staff at McGill. Upon recommendation by these committees, the university put into place unlimited appointments and a severance package for academics who had contracts of at least 9 months duration for 5 or more uninterrupted years. It also clarified many issues related to the availability of benefits. Most major benefits (pension plan, life insurance, medical, dental, long-term disability and others) were available to academics teaching to any extent on a contract basis, as only those earning less than \$4,000 per year, or with a contract for less than nine months duration were excluded.

To learn more about their concerns, and to encourage part-time academics to participate in MAUT, two members of the collegiality committee recently held the first in what we hope will be a series of meetings with academics who teach at McGill on a course-by-course basis, under the title of Course Lecturer or Faculty Lecturer.

**3. Information meeting on unions versus**

**associations of academic staff.** The collegiality committee recommended to MAUT Council that a meeting be held during the first week of March, during lunchtime, and that the usual sandwich lunch be provided. A similar meeting was held three years ago, and the committee recommended that the two speakers from the previous meeting, David Levy and David Stevens, who were members of the two MAUT committees on this topic, direct the presentations from the union and association points of view. They could choose to work with any of their colleagues to prepare and speak on the subject. The committee also agreed that the meeting should not be open to non-members, although the usual practice of allowing a member to sign in one guest would be followed. These recommendations were brought to the MAUT Council for approval, and in addition Council approved the inclusion of two external speakers, Jim Turk, Executive Director of CAUT, and Roch Denis, President of FQPPU, who will bring a perspective from the provincial and national levels, respectively. We are fortunate in that both of them have agreed to participate. An agenda and related articles will appear in the

next Newsletter. The MAUT Council also voted to poll the membership on this matter before the term of the new executive and council begins.

**4. Mentoring program for junior academic staff.** The committee decided to consider this topic for a number of reasons. There is a strong belief that gaining tenure is becoming more and more difficult in times of financial restraint, and younger staff are often under considerable stress in this regard. In some areas, they may also exist in relative isolation, having little interaction with their colleagues. The committee is preparing some recommendations, which include the assignment of one or two mentors from within their department to each new faculty member. The goals of the mentor would be to provide advice and guidance in order to maximize the candidate's chances of success, to decrease the level of anxiety, and to make the initial experience at McGill a pleasant one in general. Other items under consideration include special workshops and gatherings organized by MAUT.

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**INFORMATION MEETING ON  
RELATIVE MERITS OF A UNION VERSUS AN ASSOCIATION  
OF ACADEMIC STAFF AT MCGILL**

**TUESDAY, MARCH 2  
11:30 - 1:00  
LEACOCK 232**

**NEWS ITEM FOR THOSE INTERESTED IN ATHLETIC FACILITIES:** As some of you may know, the Montreal Amateur Athletic Association is now under new management, and the facilities have been extensively improved. The McGill Faculty Club and MAUT have negotiated a special arrangement with the MAAA, whereby McGill academics will receive a discount of 30%. This means that annual membership with all privileges would cost \$1,050 instead of \$1,500, and you can join immediately. More details to follow.

### MEETINGS TO NOTE

Information on MUHC - February 11, 4pm  
Meakins Theatre, McIntyre

Information on unions versus associations  
March 2, 11:30 am, Leacock 232

Spring General Meeting  
March 25, 12 noon, Leacock 232

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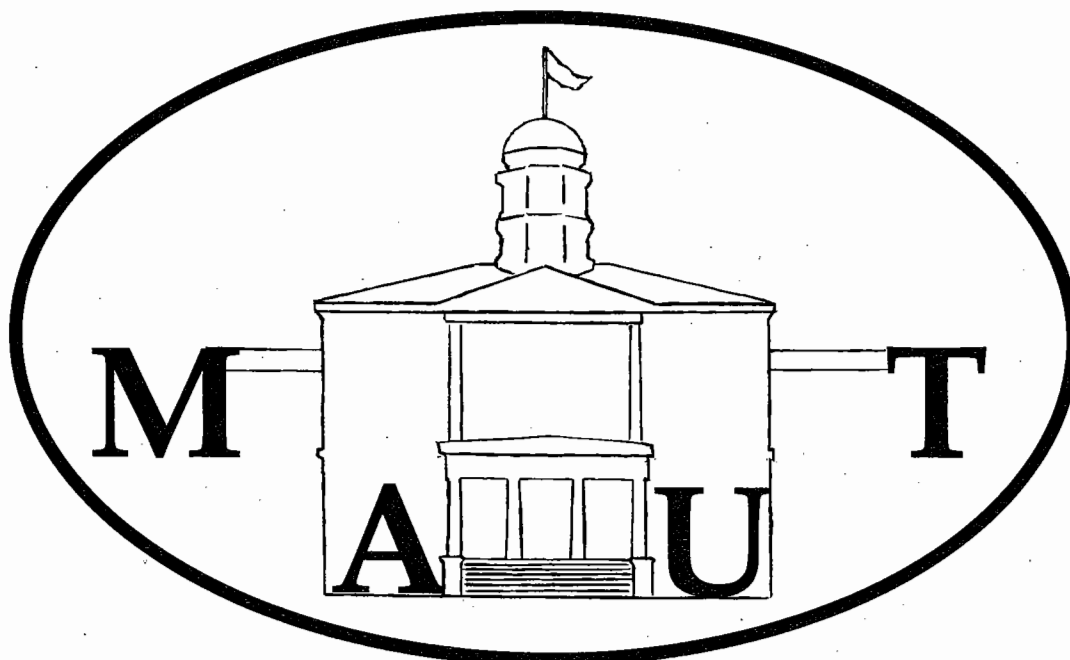
Committee on Collegiality:

University governance  
Contract and Faculty Lecturers

Information meeting  
Mentors for new academics

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