

From: "Edward Barbeau" <barbeau@math.toronto.edu>
To: <luste@utfa.org>
Sent: Tuesday, April 18, 2006 1:16 PM
Subject: Response re letter of April 7

Professor Vivek Goel, Provost, University of Toronto
Professor Angela Hildyard, Vice-President, Human Resources and Equity,
University of Toronto

Dear Colleagues,

I have just read the letter that you distributed to the active faculty members of the University of Toronto. I was sorry to note that lack of professionalism represented by the third paragraph of the letter and the paragraphs under the heading "Pensions". Unfortunately, I had formed an opinion of you, particularly Professor Goel, which would have precluded your expressing yourself in such a way.

First of all, it is entirely inappropriate to use this means of propagandizing the position the university took in the negotiations. In the negotiations, the University put forward its best arguments (as indeed it should) and these were evidently not accepted by the arbitrator. It is not fitting to continue the negotiations in this public form; if you have a case to be made, it should be made in the next round of negotiations.

You go out of your way to repeat the phrase, "No current faculty member or librarian will benefit from this provision". It is hard to escape the impression of your sowing seeds of discord among our community. This is surely unworthy of seasoned and principled administrators.

The University of Toronto Faculty Association has in recent years consistently in its negotiations asked for similar benefits for retired and active members. You were aware of this coming into the negotiations; this would be an important principle informing its side of the negotiations. UTFA represents both active and retired faculty, and its negotiating position is approved in UTFA Council. For you to complain to your active colleagues about the award is to repudiate the position that its representatives agreed to on UTFA Council. A professional negotiator must not put into question the bona fides of its adversary without just and reasonable cause. No cause was adduced during the negotiations, so it is not appropriate for you now by implication to reject a negotiating position of UTFA before its members by making a divisive

Let me point to other possible areas of unprofessionalism. I am not aware that, having criticized the pension arrangements, that you distributed your letter to the executive of RALUT as a matter of courtesy. Nor am I aware, having made comments in your letter that might adversely affect the reputation and politics of the university, that it was cleared with the Chairman of the Governing Council or the President. If such consultation indeed took place, then I will be pleased to direct my criticism to the responsible person.

Let us now get down to the basics of the issue. Even though I am now retired, my pension benefits were negotiated between UTFA and the University in exchange for other benefits not realized, in particular, a somewhat lower salary than might have been obtained. In this sense, the pension I receive can be regarded as deferred salary. This comment of course covers the formal plan, and might not be seen to apply to the negotiated extras. However, the University is not above reproach for its past actions in this area. For many years, the University granted itself a holiday from paying pension premiums, leaving the faculty during most of that period to carry the burden. While government

regulations put severe restrictions on reserves and on how the pension plan might be improved, I am aware of three steps that might legally have been taken to spend the university's share of the premiums:

- (1) move the plan towards full cost of living;
- (2) move the survivor's benefit towards 100 per cent of the pension;
- (3) bring the pension based on part of the salary covered by the CPP up to the two per cent times years of service.

The University did none of these things and pocketed the money, so it can be argued that the University has already benefited at the expense of the retirees. Indeed, it is a tenable position that the sense of grievance can rest more naturally with the retirees than with the university.

Finally, I would like to make the point that a significant proportion of retirees are still around the university and contributing to its life. I am extremely grateful that I belong to a department that provides me with the resources to do so (including the computer I am using to write this letter). While I am not supervising graduate students (as are many of my colleagues), I do serve on committees (including PhD orals) and run the Putnam and undergraduate contests for our mathematics students, at no salary. I expect that you will find several hundred retirees who have their own ways of making a contribution to the university while asking nothing in return save respect and collegiality.

I am sympathetic to the difficulties involved in university funding. In the past, the University has been less than forthcoming making known exactly what its financial resources are - I have served long enough with UTFA to be aware of how much effort that organization has put into getting a handle on the wealth of the university. So, you must expect that protestations of poverty elicit a certain amount of suspicion. However, while it is not fair to single out retirees as a source of woe, I am sure that we, particularly through RALUT and UTFA, would be prepared to work collegially towards amelioration of the situation. Even though getting long in the tooth, we can still bring forth a lot of energy and resources to the benefit of the university to which we owe considerable loyalty.

I am quite astonished that such a letter should have come from two, not one, senior administrators. In the composition of joint missives, one would normally expect that one party would act as a brake on the unwise lack of judgment of the other.

Yours sincerely,

Ed Barbeau, Professor Emeritus of Mathematics

c: President D. Naylor
RALUT Executive
UTFA President