

CUPE QUARTERLY

Volume 1 Issue 1



The Unseen in our Cosmic Neighbourhood

Dark matter and the night sky

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THE MAGAZINE**

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Letter From the Editors

Dear Readers:

This is the first issue of a news and general interest magazine published and edited by the members of CUPE 3906, which represents academic workers at McMaster University.

The magazine is the brainchild of the Unit 1 mobilization committee, a group of teaching and research assistants who took on a more active role in the union during the last round of bargaining and last fall's strike. We are not members of the union executive. We are regular McMaster students from a variety of academic backgrounds who got involved in the union because we care about the quality of education at our university.

We formed the Unit 1 mobilization committee in the aftermath of the strike for two reasons. We were impressed by the support that materialized within our historically conservative local last fall. We also recognized that many of our friends and colleagues feel alienated, or apathetic towards, the bargaining process and the union itself. We aim to keep up the momentum generated last term, improve the way the union communicates with its members, develop the union's public profile, and encourage average members like ourselves to become involved in the day to day activities of the union and its decision making processes. We also hope to bridges between different departments and types of academic workers.

The magazine is a first step to furthering these goals. In each issue you can expect to find a mix of general interest articles, poetry, art, opinion pieces and photographs contributed by members, articles that deepen your understanding of your collective agreement rights and what the union does, commentary on issues facing Ontario academic workers, and fun stuff like puzzles and contests.

We value the diversity of our membership and hope that hits magazine eventually reflects it. We thus welcome contributions from sessional faculty, post-docs, and teaching and research assistants from every department on campus. We also welcome people to contribute articles and opinion pieces written from a variety of academic and political perspectives as long as they do does not violate our equity statement. Keep an eye on the website for submission details and deadlines.

In solidarity,
The Editors.

CUPE 3906 Equity Statement

Union solidarity is based on the principle that union members are equal and deserve mutual respect at all levels. Any behaviour that creates conflict prevents union members from working together to strengthen the union and its initiatives.

As unionists we aim to achieve mutual respect, cooperation and understanding throughout our membership. We neither condone nor tolerate behaviour that undermines the dignity or self-esteem of any individual or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment.

A hostile or offensive environment includes discriminatory speech or conduct, which is racist, sexist, transphobic or homophobic and/or discrimination based on (in)ability, age, class, religion, language and ethnic origin. A hostile and intimidating environment also includes attempts to de-voice other members by ignoring GMM speaking practices or by talking over, yelling, rolling eyes at or shutting down contributions made by others.

Sometimes discrimination takes the form of harassment. Harassment means using real or perceived power to abuse, devalue or humiliate others. Harassment will not be perceived or treated as frivolous behaviour. The uneasiness and resentment that harassment creates hinder the growth of the union by hampering our capacity to work together on shared concerns such as decent wages, safe working conditions and justice in the workplace, society and in our union.

The above-mentioned components of a hostile environment hurt and divide the union and compromise CUPE's policies and commitments to equality. Members, staff and elected officers must be mindful that all members deserve dignity, equality and respect.

CUPE QUARTERLY



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- artWork
- events

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The Unseen in Our Cosmic Neighborhood

Sarah Nickerson

Department of Physics and Astronomy



When most people think of the Milky Way, they picture the luminous ribbon of stars strung across the night sky. Sometimes, they might even imagine the Milky Way as a spiraled disk as seen from above. The stellar disk, however, is only a minor part of the entire galaxy. Our Milky Way is a classic barred spiral galaxy with three components: a halo, a disk and a bulge.

The halo is its largest component, comprising of about 95% of the Milky Way's mass, even though we cannot even see it. This is because the halo is made up of dark matter, a type of particle that only interacts gravitationally and does not affect light. In fact, the gravitational force of the dark matter halo holds the entire galaxy together. Without it, gas would not have collected densely enough to cool and form our stars. Aside from dark matter, the halo also contains tightly bound packs of older stars known as globular clusters.

The disk is embedded in the halo, like a Frisbee thrust into a basketball, and is made up of swirls of younger, brighter stars and interstellar gas that we see. It is these disk stars that provide a fundamental clue to the dark matter halo's existence. In a galaxy, the more mass it has, the faster it rotates. If one were to count the disk's mass in stars and compare that to the

stars' rotation, one will find that the stars are rotating too quickly for their total mass. The solution is that the dark matter in the halo provides the missing mass so that the stars' rotational velocities make sense.

The final component of our galaxy is the bulge. This is a spherical blob that sits squarely in the centre of the disk, composed of older stars on random orbits, and at the very heart of the Milky Way lies Sagittarius A*, a supermassive black hole. Just like dark matter black holes cannot be observed directly, but for different reasons. Smaller black holes are the cores of dead stars so dense that nothing can escape their gravitational pull, even light. When many stellar-mass black holes clump together they form a supermassive black hole. There are two main ways we can indirectly see Sagittarius A*, however. The first is that using the orbits of stars around the galactic centre, one can calculate the mass of an unseen object that they must be orbiting around, much like how the sun controls the Earth's orbit. The second way is from radio-wave emissions caused by the collisions between gas falling into the black hole.

This is only a small sample of the intriguing invisibles our Milky Way hosts. Next time when you gaze up to the sky at night, thank your lucky stars for that dark matter.



Memoria y Presente

Día Nacional de la Memoria, por la Verdad y la Justicia

Memory and Present: National day of the memory, for truth and justice.

Valentín Cassano

Department of Computing and Software

“Progress, far from consisting in change, depends on retentiveness. When change is absolute there remains no being to improve and no direction is set for possible improvement: and when experience is not retained, as among savages, infancy is perpetual. Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” – George Santayana.

This article acknowledges those who keep the memory of the *Proceso de Reorganización Nacional* alive and work tirelessly in the search of truth and justice.

Since 2006, Argentina has recognized March 24th as *Día Nacional de la Memoria*. On this somber day, public ceremonies across the country recall the military dictatorship known as the *Proceso de Reorganización Nacional* and commemorate the victims its state-sponsored campaign of violence and terror, “The Dirty War” (1976-1983). The most important ceremonies happen in Buenos Aires, where local artists perform and speeches are made by the president and prominent members of human rights organizations. At schools and universities, observations related to *Día Nacional de la Memoria* take place throughout the week. March 24th was chosen because the coup d’état that

brought the military *junta* to power took place on the same day in 1976.

The primary goal of these public acts of remembrance is to keep the memory of the *Proceso de Reorganización Nacional* alive in order to prevent it from happening again. After military rule was established, the government subverted the independence of the judiciary, suspended civil rights, repressed Argentine institutions and civil society, and embarked on a systematic campaign of violence and terror directed against its own citizens. Tens of thousands of people were kidnapped during the night from their own homes by the police and military, illegally detained in secret detention centres for indefinite periods of time, tortured and often executed. Babies stolen from the kidnapped were put up for adoption without notifying their families. The Human rights organizations estimate that as many as 30,000 people disappeared in this fashion between 1976 and 1983. The fate of many remains unknown. Many of those affected were students from high schools and universities.

Much has been done in the search for truth and justice since democracy was restored in 1983. In the 1980s, an investigation by the National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons (CoNaDeP) established that

systematic violations of human rights had occurred during the juntas' rule. These revelations lead to the another important effort: the trials of the military juntas. The testimony of victims of detention and torture given during these proceedings exposed the regime's brutal treatment of its citizens and helped hold the juntas criminally accountable for their actions.

Another special mention has to be made about the *Madres y Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*. The Mothers of the Plaza the Mayo is a human rights organization formed by women who had met each other in the course of trying to find children who disappeared during the juntas' rule. The Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo attempts to find babies stolen from "disappeared" parents. These women of courage stand for justice not revenge. Since 1977, they have lobbied the government, appeared before the courts, waded through records and scoured the countryside in search of their missing children and grandchildren. They never give up hope that they will someday find their missing loved ones.

Notwithstanding these important efforts, the search for the truth and the fight for justice has not been an easy one. Although progress has been made there is still much more

to be done. For example, there have been frequent attempts to thwart the judicial process by declaring amnesties that exempt certain individuals from prosecution or by pardoning those convicted of crimes.

It is important to remark that the majority of Argentine society participates in the process of condemning what occurred and does not want to see history repeat itself. As long as the memory of this period is kept active in the present, backsliding is prevented.

To conclude, a beautiful quote belonging to Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, who earned the Nobel Peace Prize in 1980 for its work on human rights in Latin American:

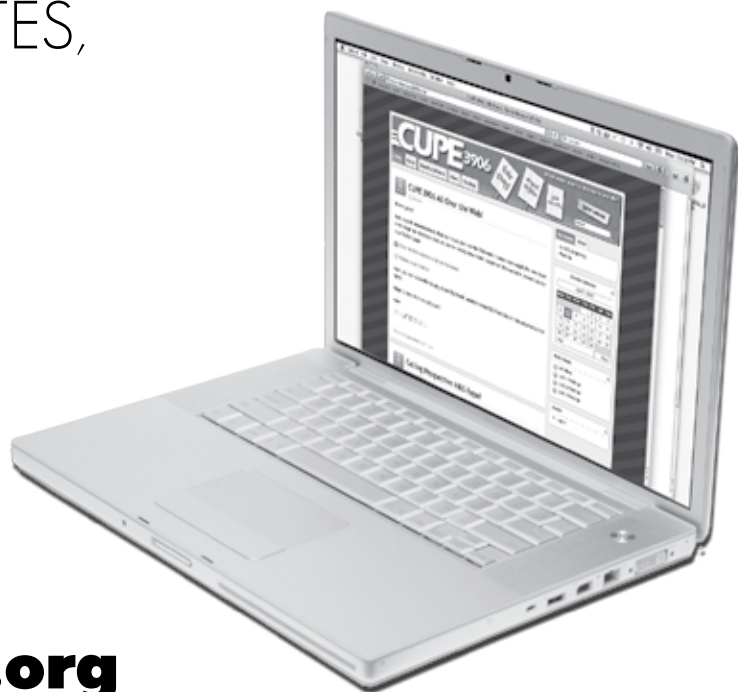
The memory enlightens the present and generates the future of the people and even our own lives. History is the living memory of the people, constructed over time, between light and shadow, between suffering and resistance.

Lastly, it would be impossible to close without stating *Never Again* and *30.000 disappeared, present, now and forever.*

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Investing in the Future?

Education Funding in the 2010 Ontario Budget

Rebecca Strung

Department of History

The 2010 Ontario budget included \$310 million in new funding for colleges and universities to create 20,000 new spaces and to expand foreign student enrolment by fifty percent. A few days later, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities announced the extension of the government's tuition fee policy, which limits tuition hikes to four percent for undergraduates and eight percent for graduate students. It also unveiled the creation of 1000 new graduate scholarships and a student aid student aid reform package worth \$81 million. Highlights of the package include: a \$10 increase to the weekly loan limit, a \$53 increase in the amount of money a student can earn per week without their loan being clawed back, an interest free grace period on student loans for six months after graduating and a \$500 part time student grant.

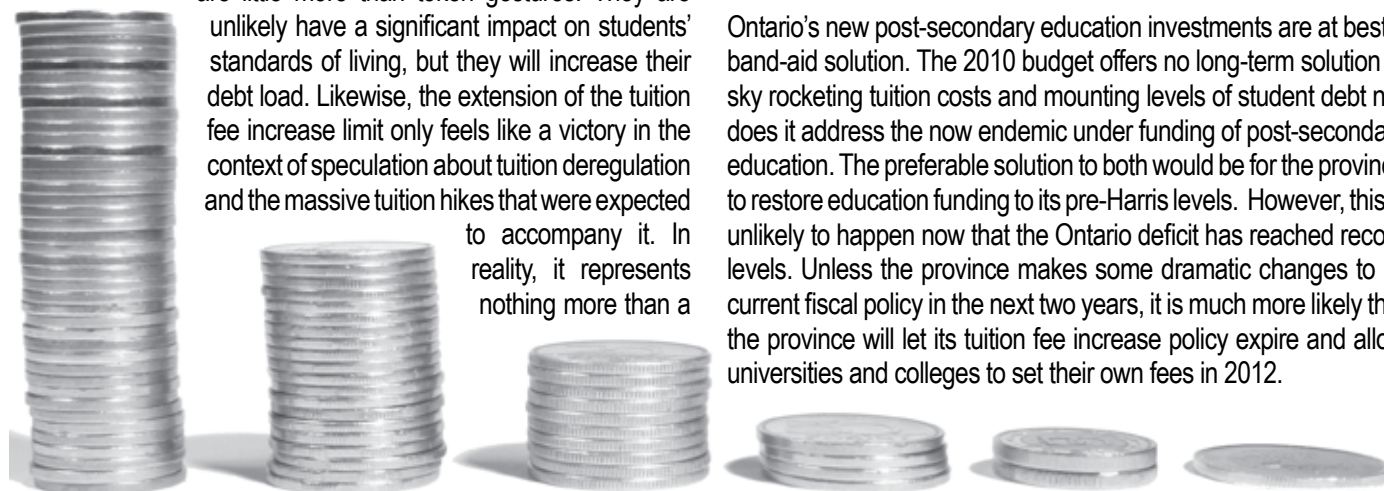
On the surface, the new post-secondary education commitments revealed last month appear to be good news for students and institutions alike. Indeed, student groups across the province applauded the MTCU announcement. At McMaster, a gleeful MSU called it "meaningful and substantial contribution to the betterment of higher education" and an "undisputable victory for students." Administrators also responded warmly. According to the Sil, Mac provost Ilene Busch Vishniac praised McGuinty for keeping post-secondary education a priority.

On closer examination, however, the province's new initiatives actually offer little for students. With the exception of the interest-free grace period on student loans, the student aid reforms are little more than token gestures. They are unlikely have a significant impact on students' standards of living, but they will increase their debt load. Likewise, the extension of the tuition fee increase limit only feels like a victory in the context of speculation about tuition deregulation and the massive tuition hikes that were expected to accompany it. In reality, it represents nothing more than a

continuation of the status quo – which for Mac students means annual tuition increases of four to eight percent for the next two or more years. Although the addition of 1000 new OGS scholarships finally fixes the gap between graduate student spaces and available scholarships, it should have been par for the course when graduate programs were expanded across the province.

These initiatives are not likely to help struggling post-secondary institutions either. At McMaster, the government's call to increase student enrolment comes at a time when hundreds of contractually limited faculty, support staff and sessional faculty have been, or are facing, layoffs due to budgetary pressures. A new grant to expand student enrolment is unlikely to help Mac keep these positions. Nor will it solve the underlying budgetary pressures that schools like McMaster are facing. Although exacerbated by the global recession (which caused University endowment funds to lose value), Ontario colleges and universities have been facing financial problems since their public funding was slashed during the Harris years. Despite some well publicized investments in post-secondary education, the McGuinty government has failed to restore college and university funding to pre-Harris levels. In fact, under the watch of Harris and McGuinty, per-student funding declined from \$10,551 in 1993 to around \$8,000. In the absence of adequate public funding, Ontario colleges and universities will continue to experience budgetary shortfalls that they will try to solve through tuition hikes and budget cuts. The inevitable result of this is that students will pay more for less. The quality of education will decline but its price will continue to rise.

Ontario's new post-secondary education investments are at best a band-aid solution. The 2010 budget offers no long-term solution to sky rocketing tuition costs and mounting levels of student debt nor does it address the now endemic under funding of post-secondary education. The preferable solution to both would be for the province to restore education funding to its pre-Harris levels. However, this is unlikely to happen now that the Ontario deficit has reached record levels. Unless the province makes some dramatic changes to its current fiscal policy in the next two years, it is much more likely that the province will let its tuition fee increase policy expire and allow universities and colleges to set their own fees in 2012.



Teaching & Research Assistants

The Unit 1 collective agreement protects TAs and RAs (in lieu) from working extra hours without compensation. A TA/RA experiencing overwork is entitled to meet with his or her supervisor to negotiate a workload reduction and/or compensation for extra hours worked.

You may be overworked if:

- You frequently spend more than ten hours of work per week on TA/RA duties.
- You often exceed the time allotted for a task on the hours of work form.
- You are on track to exceed 130 hours this term (or for partial or compressed appointments, the total number of hours of work in your contract this term).

Steps to Take:

- 1) Request a meeting with your supervisor
- 2) In the meantime, calculate (or estimate) how many hours you have worked so far this term. If you have not already been doing so, start keeping track of the hours you work. This is important because of the new University policy explained below.
- 3) Negotiate an acceptable solution with your supervisor. This will normally be an amendment to your hours of work that reduces your workload or approval to work extra hours at your regular wage.
- 4) If you cannot reach an agreement with your supervisor, contact the union.

NEW University Admin Policy states that TAs/RAs should STOP working when they reach their maximum number of hours

If you have informed your supervisor about your overwork situation but are awaiting a meeting or a decision, you should STOP working when you reach the total number of hours you were contracted to work this term.

Not sure if you're being overworked? Here's an easy way to figure it out:

- 1) Keep track how much time you spend on each of your TA/RA duties for the next week or so.
- 2) Compare the time you spend on each task to the time allotted for it on the hours of work form. If you routinely exceeding the time allotted for each task, you are being overworked.

Sessional Faculty & Sessional Music Faculty

The Unit 2 collective agreement addresses overwork in two ways:

- 1) **Class Size Stipends.** In classes that exceed 75 students, Sessional Faculty/Music Faculty are entitled to a stipend of \$5.75 per student (3 unit course) or \$11.50 per student (6 unit course). The stipend is paid as a lump sum and calculated based on the official class size.
- 2) **Extra remuneration for work performed after the date your contract officially ends.** If your employment supervisor



requests that you do work after the date your contract ends, you are entitled to be paid for this work on at a per diem rate of \$59.00 / hour.

How to exercise these rights:

You can exercise these rights by bringing them to the attention of your employment supervisor. If this does not resolve the issue, contact the union.

Post Doctoral Fellows

The Unit 3 collective agreement protects post doctoral fellows from:

- working more than 60 hours in one week
- working more than 176 hours in any two consecutive bi-weekly pay periods without advance written notice from his/her employment supervisor

You can exercise these rights by bringing them to the attention of your employment supervisor. If this does not resolve the issue, contact the union.

If you work more than 176 hours in a bi-weekly pay period, the collective agreement also entitles you to compensating time off (CTO). CTO is calculated at 1.5 hours for every hour worked.

How to claim your CTO:

- 1) Under the collective agreement, you must submit the number of hours you worked in the previous week on Monday (or Friday if Monday is a holiday). If you do not submit your hours it is assumed that you worked 35 hours.
- 2) Meet with your supervisor to arrange a mutually convenient time to take your CTO. You must take your CTO within three months of accruing it.

Questions about overwork and/or your rights? Contact one of our union staff members or the grievance officer.

Puzzles

Sudoku

9				1	6		4	
2	4				7			
	7	1		2				6
		2		9		4		3
			1		2			
3		9		4		2		
6				8		3	2	
			4				6	1
	8		2	6				5

Puzzle by websudoku.com

Logic Puzzle

The Impossible test

On the beauty of mathematics

The following is an old logical puzzle. This particular version is based on the explanation provided by Adrián Paenza in *La prueba que no se puede tomar*.

The story begins by considering the following situation: A professor enters his classroom one day and announces to his students that a surprise test will occur before the end of the term. It is assumed that the Professor teaches classes once a week and always makes good on his promises, which in this case means that the test will be a surprise to his students. The students then proceed to deduce when the surprise test will take place.

One of the students in the class points out the following: Clearly, the test cannot take place during the last class. If only one class remained in the term and the test had not yet occurred, we would be able to conclude that it would have to take place during the last class. It would thus not be a surprise. Since the test must be a surprise, it cannot happen during the last week. After a little deliberation, all of the students convince themselves that this conclusion is correct.

But then, another student argues: Wait! If the test cannot occur during the last week of the term, then it cannot occur in the second to last week either! The student then proceeds to explain how he reached that conclusion. If we have reached the third to last class without the test occurring and it is impossible for the test to occur in the last class, we can conclude that it must take place during the second last week. However, as above, if that were the case then it would not be a surprise test because we would know when it would occur. Therefore, the test cannot take place in the second last week or the last week. After a heated deliberation, the students agree that this conclusion is also correct.

Extending the above modus of reasoning, it can be argued that the test cannot occur on any week in the term. Upon agreeing to this conclusion, the students decided that there was no need to study for the test since it could never take place.

Nonetheless, surprise tests do happen and they are always a surprise! (It should also be noted that as students we should be always prepared for surprise tests.)

I will end the story here, for once I heard that one of the biggest mistakes in telling a story is to comment on its ending. I will leave it up to the reader to determine whether or not there is a fault in the above reasoning or to envisage other possible endings.

Valentín Cassano, Department of Computing and Software



**UNIT 2 BARGAINING
HAS BEGUN**

You can support your team by:

- joining the Bargaining Support Team*
- reading Bargaining Bulletins*
- attending General Membership Meetings*
- informing yourself on the issues*

Email staff@cupe3906.org
or call x24003 for more info