

# Roots Stew

Food politics from the grassroots



**Also Featuring:**  
Unit 2 Benefit Increases  
USW 1005 Lockout Photo Essay  
Bargaining & Mobilization Updates

# Letter From the President

Dear Members,

It's almost spring...the end of term approaches...and we are pleased to bring you the latest installment of the Ally! In this issue, we bring you articles on contract negotiations and food politics, among other offerings that aim to give you a better introduction to your fellow members and the people who work behind the scenes to defend your rights every day.

With the arrival of spring, you may notice posters and e-mails advertising events in your department that address our upcoming contract negotiations. Both the TA and RA (in lieu) Unit and the Postdoc Unit contracts are up for negotiations starting in the late spring. This means that if you are a TA, RA (in lieu) or Postdoc it's your time to have your say about your contract through consultations, surveys, and meetings. And it's your time to get involved—the only strength we have is together.

A case in point is our Sessional Faculty and Sessional Music Faculty unit. Because of the determination and unity that Sessionals demonstrated in the most recent round of negotiations, we have been able to move forward with a benefits increase on a trial basis for this Unit. Sessionals also fought off serious job security claw-backs that would leave not only this generation but also the next generation of Sessionals with a meager month's worth of job security. Great work by our Sessional Faculty and Sessional Music Faculty members against difficult odds!

In solidarity,  
Mary Ellen Campbell  
President, CUPE 3906

## CUPE 3906 Equity Statement

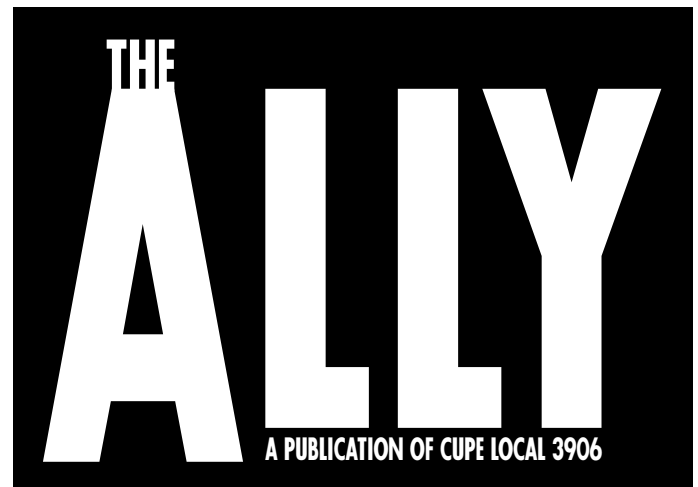
Union solidarity is based on the principle that union members are equal and deserve mutual respect at all levels. Any behaviour that creates conflict prevents union members from working together to strengthen the union and its initiatives.

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.



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Nick Longaphy

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# Roots Stew

## Food politics from the grassroots

By: CUPE 3906 Political Action Committee

**D**eadlines are looming and you're tucked away in an office or library typing madly, actually feeling a little productive for once; and then - oh no, please, not now - it happens...you feel the familiar rumble and look around to see if anyone else noticed (no, whew); but it's not long before it happens again and reluctantly, you accept the call of nature....you need food. While making a soup and salad at home, or picking up a quick bite from one of campus food outlets may not feel like a particularly political activity, food - how we choose it, get it, pay for it, and consume it - actually couldn't be more political (although sadly it is not politicized enough in Hamilton). It's time we all served up some 'roots stew and start talking more politically about food issues in our city.

The Hamilton Farmer's Market (downtown, on York Boulevard) has just had a facelift and a grand re-opening. Many of us may have heard that plans for the new market space left some stallholders out in the cold; then some noise was made and it turned out that everyone could be accommodated, though we cannot confirm to what level of satisfaction with the new stall spaces. How many of us have taken a few minutes to dig a bit deeper into the roots of this issue and ask which decisions are made, by whom, and whom do they affect?

Yes, food is a biological necessity; it is also a (if not the) central focus of economies and food practices are both socially constructed and a vitally important part of our culture. Testaments to this are the stardom of the Gordon Ramsays and Jamie Olivers of the world and the prestige associated with such treats as a rare vintage wine or gourmet caviar. When and with whom we break bread are long-imbued cultural traditions, even touted as holding evolutionary significance for humans. Shared meals build relationships with peers and kin on a daily basis, and the attributed importance of foods to special occasions reminds us that the cultural significance of food extends beyond our immediate environs. How many North Americans would feel like it's not a birthday without a cake? In Vietnam, bánh chưng is eaten during the New Year and requires more than a day's preparation, a temporal investment indicative of the importance of food in

symbolism and ritual. So even if it's a bit unexpected, it's not entirely absurd that the Hamilton Farmers' Market is administered through the Department of Culture and Recreation of the City of Hamilton.

Many would name locally produced food as the very core, the *raison d'être*, of a farmers market. These days you can hardly lift your fork without hearing about the benefits of buying local or learning about the latest food and culture event going on in our city - and this is a fabulous thing. Not only does eating local support the regional economy, but it can also reduce carbon emissions associated with long-distance food transportation. It maintains the value of farms and farmlands so that they will be able to produce for generations to come. It ensures (as much as possible) that the labour which produced the food was held to Canadian laws and standards (though sufficiency of those standards are a whole other discussion). It tastes good and it's fresh! These are just some of the reasons that farmers' markets where a majority, or exclusivity, of vendors are local producers are popular - market customers recognize and value a food system that promotes these attributes.

A farmers' market also breathes life to idyllic images of cows grazing on green pastures and of organic vegetables harvested from the family garden that morning. The local food movement is also somewhat romanticized through value attributed to activities such as meeting "your" farmer at the market, knowing exactly where and from whom your food comes, and conversations over what's coming into season and how to best cook up this week's specials. With the current health-conscious and eat-local trends, these activities have become "posh" in certain contexts. Where they come at a relatively high price point (often, but not always, the case), these activities can be social and cultural luxuries; people with money can afford to buy and eat local, for those without money, it is much more of a challenge.

During the process of re-allocating a smaller number of Farmers' Market stalls to applicants (all of the former  
*continued on the next page*

stallholders had to re-apply for space in the renovated market), the City is said to have given preference to local producers. This speaks to very real and important benefits of supporting local food production. On the other hand, under the aegis of the Culture and Recreation Department, such a decision speaks to a desire to cater to those who have the money to buy into the social and cultural luxury of the local food movement. It also begs the question of whether stallholders may feel pressured to define and construct an identity which emulates local farmers in order to attract customers looking to buy into the health-conscious and eat-local lifestyles.

Yet again in Hamilton, we seem to be back to the g-word that keeps blood boiling in discussions of our downtown core (that g-word is gentrification if you're just now joining those discussions). Many probably see the rejuvenated Farmer's Market as yet another step in downtown Hamilton's make-over session (a view held by those maintaining various stances on gentrification). Unreservedly supporting a preference for sellers of local food in the Market overlooks two key aspects to the Farmer's Market. The first is the role of the Market as a source of reasonably-priced fresh food (especially fruits and vegetables) for downtown Hamilton. Unfortunately, local produce tends to cost more – this is a vast generalization to be sure, but much of our food can be produced elsewhere and can be produced for less there than it can here. The Farmers' Market contains a number of stallholders who are produce resellers – not local farmers but able to offer produce at a very reasonable, and often discounted, price. As a neighbourhood that sees more than its fair share of poverty, increased access to fresh food in downtown Hamilton needs to be advocated for.

Currently, we see increasingly alarming rates of chronic diseases like diabetes, heart disease, and obesity, for which we know that healthy diets high in fruits and vegetables are preventative. In addition, many people have food allergies, dietary restrictions and serious intolerances to foods or ingredients used in food products. We also know that poor nutrition impairs student learning and increases disruptive behaviour at school. And while a move to make the Market vendorship more local is not a question of decreasing geographical access to fresh, healthy foods, for many in the downtown core, it may be a question of limiting financial access to these foods. The term "food desert" is used (often in urban planning, geography, and social science disciplines) to describe areas with reduced accessibility to healthy foods. While standards for classifying any area (in any absolute terms) as a food desert do not exist, anything that would decrease accessibility to healthy foods could be considered a process of "food desertification".

The second key feature of the Hamilton Farmers' Market which would be diminished by an increasingly localized vendorship is the availability of products common to international cuisines. Hamilton is a very ethnically

diverse city, with some areas near the downtown core (like North Hamilton) being home to a high percentage of new Canadians and migrants. For many, settling in a new country is a source of financial strain, and also a time when traditions, tastes, and food practices from one's home country are being negotiated within the Canadian culture and marketplace. If we accept "food security" to be a condition in which all people have access, at all times, to sufficient, safe, nutritious, personally and culturally appropriate, affordable food, then several stallholders at the Farmers' Market surely play a role in the food security of many Hamilton households. Related to this, as pointed out in a letter published on Raise the Hammer (November 30, 2010), for Market stallholders for whom English is a foreign language or for whom literacy is limited, the very re-application process to the City may have been a bearer of inequality in opportunity. Quite likely, these are barriers more commonly faced by first or second generation Canadians and migrant workers.

So does a preference for making the Hamilton Farmer's Market more local in vendorship create gentrified space in downtown Hamilton? Or perhaps is it a result of ongoing gentrification in Hamilton's core, catering to the demand for a more upscale conceptualization of a farmers' market? What about being a space to grow our demand for local farmers – isn't local food a good thing? And perhaps moving in the direction of more local stallholders will allow greater variety and thus give more people the opportunity to meet their needs through the local food system, no? The PAC is not going to tell you that there is a right answer. What we do advocate for is an informed, participatory, and politicized discussion on how to move our food system forward. Just like a good stew, the responses to the problems in our food system need to be conglomerate, diverse, integrated, and well-simmered.

Interested in becoming part of that discussion, but don't know where to start? Here are just a few suggestions: The Ontario Public Interest Research Group (OPIRG) at McMaster maintains connections to a number of formerly or presently-active working groups focused on food issues, including Food Not Bombs, Promoting Eating Alternatively and Sustainably (PEAS) and Food for Life. Hamilton's Community Food Security Stakeholders' Committee (CFSSC) meets on the first Wednesday of every month from September to June at City Hall Meeting Room 264, 4-6pm; the meetings are open to all and public involvement is encouraged. Eat Local Hamilton maintains a blog with local food news, events and a wealth of resources: <http://hamiltoneatlocal.blogspot.com>.

What's your take on the stew? We would love to hear your thoughts on food system solutions for Hamilton, or your feedback on this article. Email [politicalaction@cupe3906.org](mailto:politicalaction@cupe3906.org). For more information about the PAC, or to find out when we will hold our next meeting or how you can become involved visit <http://pac3906.wordpress.com>.



# What to Expect in Bargaining

## Thoughts on the process after a couple of rounds

By: Nick Longaphy - *Communications Officer*

**W**ith two rounds of bargaining about to begin in April, Unit 1 and Unit 3, your Local is again looking for motivated individuals who feel they have the time and constitution to meet with the Employer and hammer out a collective agreement on behalf of our members. This will mark the third collective agreement that I have negotiated with the Employer as a member of CUPE 3906. Each round presents new challenges, contains different proposals and priorities, and gathers a new batch of Local members to meet with representatives of McMaster. There are, however, a number of challenges that we face each round that remain consistent. With that in mind, here are a few of the recurring themes that we on the bargaining team (BT) regularly encounter and occasionally lament, but are always working to improve upon.

### **The Relationship with the Employer**

Faces at the Union change often because of Graduation or academic commitments, making building a relationship with an 'opponent' is perhaps the most difficult task for many Locals who collectively bargain. For two opposing bargaining teams, grasping concepts like compassion and mutual respect is much easier than practicing them. This is especially true if weeks or months of bargaining have been moving slowly. Experience with particular members of the Employer's BT can be conducive to improving relations at the table, but only if those experiences have been positive. When a group of representatives from the Local have a bad experience with an individual representing the employer, tension and mistrust can close down lines of communication, derailing potential progress. This is a huge problem given the small number of Local members who volunteer to bargain with the employer; one negative experience can affect multiple rounds of bargaining. More than one round of bargaining has been complicated by the presence of an employer representative who has demonstrated aggression toward the Local at, or away from, the bargaining table.

### **Delays**

In many ways bargaining is like Canadian air travel: you show up much earlier than you need to, there is a lot of hanging around in different locations waiting for things to get moving, you are often uncertain of what your final destination, you never seem to finish up on time, and the government is constantly changing the rules. Bargaining typically begins in May but the completion of negotiations can continue well into the fall semester. Early sessions may

be weeks apart, but tend to occur more frequently as the summer progresses. Even moving closer to important dates like Summer Session Exams does not guarantee an increase in the frequency of meetings with the employer, nor their productivity. It is not uncommon to arrive at 10AM for a meeting with the Employer only to be informed of delays that extend until after lunch. Occasionally these sessions end with a cancellation or a brief 15 minute meeting with a portion of the Employer's team that may not put you any further ahead in negotiations, but nevertheless take an entire day. It can be equally frustrating to meet for an entire day only to find that your objectives do not match the Employer's, or are in direct opposition.

### **Non-Starters**

Regardless of the priorities of our Local or the needs of the members, there are several issues during in round of bargaining that the Employer classifies as "Non-Starters." For example, during last year's Unit 1 bargaining the employer stated that discussions relating to increased benefits were not going to happen. Benefits were one of the issues most often identified during our member survey's, but the employer refused to discuss an increase to benefits for TAs until we reached the final days of bargaining. There are often strategic reasons for deferring negotiation of specific issues until the last minute, but other items remain non-negotiable from the perspective of the Employer and will not be discuss. This, however, will has not stopped the Local from attempting to engage in Employer in negotiations surrounding highly undesirable improvements like tutorial caps, class size caps, and a pension plan for Sessional Faculty and Music Instructors.

### **Consulting with the Membership**

Each round of bargaining begins with a survey being sent out to our Local members and the compilation of data regarding issues like benefits, job security, working conditions, etc. The staff and executive at the Local use the answers provided by the membership to determine what our Local should be working to gain from negotiations. These conclusions lead to a concrete set of proposals that we use to construct a package that will be presented to the Employer when we begin negotiations. Of course, the Employer has their own list of priorities that may include making new proposals, but often also included asking for concessions like freezing compensation, removing seniority language, weakening Health and Safety provisions, etc.

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## Setting Priorities

What is very difficult each round is to weigh the new proposals inspired by the needs of the membership against the concessions demanded by the Employer. If we were to sacrifice improvements in exchange for the withdrawal of our proposals, the Local would never gain any ground. The BT must constantly reanalyze the survey data, consult with the membership, and consider the implications of various proposals to determine whether priorities should be modified or if the Local must fortify its position on a particularly significant issue. This should not give the impression that the Local and the Employer always attempt to take away from the other with their proposals. The BT regularly negotiates compromises with the Employer or works to construct language regarding constantly evolving components of our collective agreements like Violence in the Workplace, various definitions, and the general maintenance of various Employer/Local comprised committees. But it is the former issues, those that amount to the Employer attempting to subtract from the reigning collective agreement that lead to the kind of impasse we see in more contentious collective bargaining.

## Choosing to Bargain

I can say with confidence that it has been no easy thing for myself or the other long serving members of the Local's BT to take time away from family, social, or academic commitments to spend time bargaining on behalf of our 3,200 members at CUPE 3906. However, the Local is dependent upon each of its members to provide a contribution, regardless of size, to ensure its smooth operation and there are scores of ways members can offer assistance to their Local during bargaining. I can also, with equal confidence, that I was none too pleased with my membership at CUPE 3906 when I first arrived at McMaster University and, in part, joined the bargaining team because I was uncomfortable with being represented by an organization that I did not have my fingerprints on.

Now, after working through almost 10 months of collective bargaining my feelings about being in a Union and representing a the Local have both changed. The first time I contributed to constructing a reasonable proposal that was designed to aid members who came to the Local asking for help I felt like I was making a difference. When that 'reasonable' proposal was thoroughly and utterly rejected by the Employer as impractical and unnecessary I was completely shocked. And when my fellow Unit 1 members voted to accept a collective agreement that I did not support (feeling was well below what our members deserved), I was forced as a bargaining representative to accept it. Yet, we have made gains together in the last two bargaining rounds and will continue that progress into our current rounds of bargaining.

As a member we all have an opportunity and an obligation to get on board with the Local and try to make positive changes. None of us want a labour stoppage but another reality is that they can and do happen in the University sector, regularly. Don't wait until labour strife is upon us to get your hands on the wheel of the Local, take ownership of your membership in CUPE 3906.

## Member Profile

**Name:** Jerod Wagman

**Department:** Physics

**Year of Study:** 1st year, PhD.

**Previous Studies:** University of Toronto (Bsc Honors), McMaster University (MA)

**Current Research Area (in lay terms):** Magnetism in Matter

**Supervisor:** Dr. Bruce Gaulin

**Non-academic interests:** Biking, haidong gumdo (Korean martial arts using a sword), playing hockey and video games.

**If I was not in the field of Physics, I would be...:** A lawyer

### Things I love about attending McMaster University:

The campus is great. I have a good office. When I worked at UofT, I worked in a basement with concrete everywhere. I have windows in my office [now]! Do you know how great windows are?!... We have some of the best crystal growth labs in the building I work in... There are some really amazing collaborators [here], especially in my field.

**Career Goals:** I could become a faculty member... or, go the instrument scientist route, which is becoming affiliated with a government lab of some sort. But I am also interested in industry. People who know what I am saying will say 'that's very general,' but I am only in my first year of my PhD. These are all sorts of things I am very interested in because they all have incredible opportunities. But I want to see where my research goes... before I say 'That is exactly what I am going to do'.



### Advice to incoming graduate students:

We have got it pretty damn good here. There are lots of things all over the place to take advantage of... Don't just focus on what's been put in front of you. Look around a little bit.

*Compiled by  
Sanchari Sur*



# Introducing Diana Zawadzki

**New Vice President of CUPE Local 3906**

By: Sanchari Sur - <http://sursanchari.wordpress.com>

**A** “bad tv” addict in her spare time (see America’s Next Top Model and Big Brother) and a third year PhD student in sociology, Diana Zawadzki is no stranger to “union business,” as she puts it, “I started getting interested in the union business when I was doing my Master’s at Queen’s [University]”. Her decision to run for Vice President of CUPE Local 3906 at McMaster University came from her desire to get involved in “a more hands-on role in the operations of the union”. She explains her connection with CUPE 3906, “I am pretty pro-union to begin with... [and] I really enjoy our Local. I think it’s fantastic that it has got a flat, democratic structure rather than being hierarchical. And, I think there is a lot of good work that we are doing and can be doing. And so, I am excited generally to be a part of the executive.”

From an earlier “Member at Large” to a “Recording Secretary” for the union, Diana talks about her current role as a VP, “Generally, vice presidents have an ambiguous role... what I am hoping to do with the role is alleviate some of the burden of the work that gets pushed onto the president [such as] going into meetings that happen with the employer, board of governor’s meetings... and trying to be actively engaged in the larger labour structure.”

Although a newbie executive with CUPE 3906, Zawadzki is candid when she points out areas of our Local in need of improvement: “I think there is a problem with getting people actively engaged in the functioning of the union and understanding that CUPE as the Local that represents TAs [and graduate students]... that we are all in the same boat, fighting for our collective rights. There is a little bit of view of CUPE as we are ‘them’... when what we really want to do is get people actively engaged so that we can properly represent their interests... I think there is a little bit of disconnect...

The executive is constantly in a state of thinking about ways to properly reach members. And whatever we try, we always seem to come up empty handed.”

Originally a native of Nova Scotia, Diana is passionate about her research at McMaster, “[I am] studying non-heterosexual Christian women and identity formation, and [looking at] what can be conceptualized as conflicting identities... [I am also examining] how women engage in the larger debates that are happening within Christianity in Canada from a number of different denominational perspectives.” However, she reveals that her career goals are not just confined to an academic career: “I think I am more interested in getting involved in union related things rather than pursuing a career in academia... I have become a little disenchanted with all the back patting and hand holding and getting ahead by knowing people and stuff. You always hope that academia is going to be a place of actual free exchange of ideas and radical thinking... and it just ends up being a lot of politics.”

When asked if the forbidden nature of getting involved in something that goes against the big system attracted her to getting involved with student politics, she goes silent for a few seconds and then asks, “You mean like anti-establishment?”

Yes, I say. She smiles and replies, “Maybe...but there was a point at which I realized that although I enjoy being a Teaching Assistant, at some point you have to protect yourself and realize that you are in fact a worker... And, we are a really fantastic source of cheap labour! [laughs]... I think it was a switch in understanding that... I am actually doing work and I need to be recognized for the work that I do.”



# The Architecture of Resistance

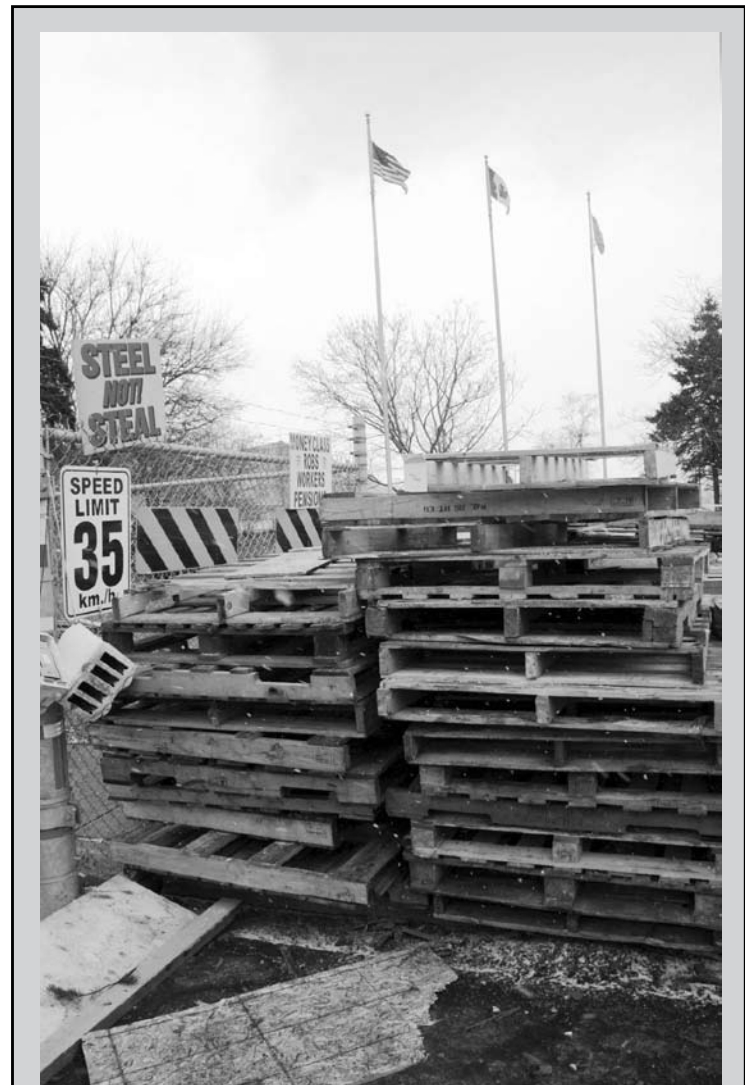
Story by: Sally Carraher

Photos by: Sally Carraher & Lynnette Hornung

**U**nited Steel Workers Local 1005 members are continuing to protest being locked out of their factory by their employer, U.S. Steel, for refusing to accept proposed concessions to the company's pension plan. Since being closed on November 7, 2010, the gates at the plant formerly named Stelco have been anything but quiet. As steel production and bargaining progress have halted on the inside, union resistance and public outcry have literally transformed the area in front of the gates. I do not pretend to know all that goes on at the picket lines throughout the week, nor do I intend to try to speak to all of the concerns of the people who have gathered together in this struggle. But I do feel that one thing tying all of the Steelworkers and other community members together is the materiality and energy of the protest space itself. This photo essay is a peek through my own eyes at the architecture and evolution of a space of resistance, a dynamic space in which the donations of materials and time provide the substance and fuel for this ongoing struggle.

This space is growing, not shrinking, and it is through the daily activities of the picketers – and the public's response to this activity – that Stelco will be able to transform again, this time into a rejuvenated space of local steel production, local jobs, and local pride. I invite everyone to come out to the factory picket line to experience this great community energy for yourselves. Join in the picketing for an afternoon and meet some of the Steelworkers, or just pass by and drop off some hot coffees or cocoa, or a few kind words. The picketers are there 24 hours a day, in front of the factory gates (You can take the #4 bus from King Street East and Bay Street and get off at the Wilcox stop). Or email [politicalaction@cupe3906.org](mailto:politicalaction@cupe3906.org) to find out when you can join various groups of McMaster students and CUPE 3906 members for solidarity picketing, which is usually organized for Saturday afternoons.

And on May Day (May 1st), we're taking this struggle on the road – to rally at Parliament Hill in Ottawa. For more information, contact USW 1005 by calling 905-547-1417 or email [info@uswa1005.ca](mailto:info@uswa1005.ca).



Tall stacks of wood pallets for the furnace standby next to the factory gates, where the sign “Steel, not Steal” is positioned as a reminder of why people keep manning the picket lines day in and day out.



Through the chain-link fence demarcating the entrance to the steel factory, we see a desolate and empty yard where trucks and workers should instead be busily going about the process of producing and moving steel. On the stop sign hung by picketing USW 1005 union members, someone has added the sticker: “Out of a job yet? Keep buying foreign”.





Steelworkers and community members play ball hockey in front of the steel factory gates in order to keep warm on a Saturday afternoon in early January. Donated hockey goals and equipment remain on site for anyone to use. Some nights picketers play games in full goalie gear on the black top, illuminated by flood lights.

You can see sunshine pouring in through the tarps overhead, which are peppered with holes from the bits of hot ash emanating from the furnace. Every piece of furniture inside and the coats, hoodies, and toques of anyone who spends a significant amount of time near the furnace ends up pock-marked by the bits of ash. In a very real sense, people take this space home with them after they leave picket duty; they are marked by the ash and the odour of burnt wood and smoke.



This fort has been evolving since the beginning of the lockout by U.S. Steel in early November. The structure is lined on one side with an old USWA trailer and reinforced all around with plastic tarps and wood pallets donated by workers. What started as a small open-air arena of pallets, two barrel fires and a small metal stove has become the site of a community fortress. Today, extending approximately 10 feet in the air from the belly of an old wood-burning furnace, is the stove pipe which exits through the patchwork of tarps overhead, releasing smoke and small flakes of hot ash from the center of the big top. Numerous union flags wave in solidarity in front of the structure; the dirtiest flags have been standing in support for the longest. In the background, the U.S.A., Canadian, and U.S. Steel company flags loom from a safe distance, appearing juxtaposed to this space of resistance.

One Steelworker I spoke with said that for years he didn't understand why his union is so active in the affairs and struggles of other unions and community groups, over causes which seemed to him to have very little to do with the functioning of the factory or the needs of its own workers and pensioners. Gesturing to the various union flags erected all around the fort, he told me, "Now I get it."



On January 29, 2011, the resistance spread from the factory gates to the core of downtown. Protestors out for the Hamilton Day of Action march along King Street East up through Gore Park, demanding an end to lockout and the introduction of fair bargaining between U.S. Steel and USW 1005. On May 1, Hamiltonians will march again, this time on Parliament Hill in Ottawa.



USW 1005 union members and allies from the community chat and try to keep warm during Saturday picket duty inside the impromptu-shelter of wood pallets and plastic tarps. Someone donated an old furnace to the cause, which is now the prominent feature around which folks gather. Couches, lawn chairs, and particle-board boxes have also been donated; this piece-meal collection of second-hand furniture symbolizes the solidarity of this space – a space for many different people to come together for a common cause.



Tim Horton's cups make for an inexpensive lock-out clock on the factory gates at Stelco. At over 115 days and counting now, the pressure exerted by Ontario communities, unions, and the Canadian government is mounting against U.S. Steel.

# New Staff Hire

## Welcome to CUPE 3906

By: **Nick Longaphy** - *Communications Officer*

**M**idway through the 2009/2010 academic year, one of our staff at the Local, Jesse Payne, began a year-long leave. In the interim, the Local was able to bring in Dave Hauch, a part-time staff member from CUPE 3913 at Guelph University. During his short time at our Local Dave has provided a spark to both the Executive and to negotiations with the employer, as well as a fresh, welcome perspective on how to improve the Local.

Recently, Jesse informed the Local that he would not be returning to CUPE 3906 at McMaster, having taken a position at CUPE 3902 at the University of Toronto. We wish him all the best. An experienced and committed staff rep like Jesse, is not easily replaced. The Executive at the Local felt confident after their ten months of experience with Dave to offer him our staff opening, which he has accepted.

Paired with our long-time staff member, Nancy McBain, who has spent five years working passionately on behalf of the Local level and in coordination with many other Universities in Ontario, our new team is busily preparing for what is shaping up to be a very, very busy summer for the Local. The focus of the Local is to ensure the safety and fair treatment of CUPE workers on campus, but these goals are only possible with the hard work offered by dedicated, resilient staff members; we are lucky to have two. So welcome, Dave, to our team at the Local, and thank you Nancy for your continuing efforts.



Local Staff Representatives Nancy MacBain and Dave Hauch



# Member Mobilizing for Unit 1 and Unit 3 Bargaining

By: **Shane Stewart** - *Grievance Officer & Member Mobilizer*

**E**ach academic year our Local receives six “book-offs,” which are used to exempt members from their TA duties in order to provide services for Local. Three of these book-offs are used to allow the Local’s President to fulfill her duties while the others go to “Member Mobilizers,” a position created by the Local to encourage participation from members and collect information before collective bargaining begins. I, Shane Stewart, was chosen for the winter Member Mobilizer bookoff during the fall semester. Accepting this role has provided an interesting change of pace away from marking and teaching tutorials, as a lot of my current work is self-driven; something TAs rarely experience. So far, my focus has been on meeting with the Executive and Staff of the Local to create the membership bargaining surveys that will identify the key issues for the Units 1 and 3 heading into bargaining. The position is about to kick into high gear when, in the coming weeks, surveys will be distributed as well and planning consultations within departments will take place.

In regards to my Unit 1 work (TAs and RAs) it feels like the strike ended a month ago, so it is hard to believe we are once again entering bargaining. There is a considerable amount of pressure to create both a representative survey and one that will clearly define our bargaining priorities so that we can show the employer we are united. Unit 1 ranges from undergraduates to PhD holders, engineering students to humanities students, domestic students to international students, and students with different levels of funding from their departments. The many complex issues that must be resolved during bargaining require a survey that meets everyone’s expectations. However, beyond meeting these goals I am striving to use my position to build solidarity within Unit 1.

Unit 3 (Post-Doctoral Fellows) has been a much different experience. Serving as the Local’s Grievance Officer

as well as the current Member Mobilizer, I know the Unit 3 contract pretty well, but the actual members remained a mystery. After meeting with a few Post-Docs, I became aware that the bargaining priorities for this Unit’s second contract are offer challenging in their complexities. My conversations uncovered up issues relating to job security, resources, benefits, and mobilization that I feel will provide interesting conclusions when the results of the survey are compiled. I look forward to meeting more Post-Docs and learning about their experiences throughout the bargaining process.

Our bargaining surveys will be complemented by further consultation within departments. These consultations aim to communicate directly with members of each unit and also to get people involved in helping negotiate their next contract. Members looking to get involved with these departmental consultations can do so through joining the bargaining support committee, becoming a department steward, or talking with friends in your department about bargaining and more. These consultations will help the bargaining teams communicate with members about bargaining priorities, and also give members the chance to be heard in the bargaining process.

Since I have been given this space, I also want to testify to the education this book-off, my position of the executive committee, and participation in committees has given me. Working with our union in these capacities has been an incredible experience. I am learning how to organize, mobilize, communicate formally, and I have made connections with labour leaders, activists, publishers, and networked communities around Ontario. My education has made me who I am, but engaging with unionism has given me the passion to make something of it. I would encourage anyone to put in the time to get involved with upcoming Mobilizer book-offs, committees and the executive.



# Health & Safety Representatives Needed

By: Bridie James - Health & Safety Officer

The Joint Health and Safety Committees, or JHSC for short, is a group of management and labour representatives that meet regularly to discuss Health and Safety issues on McMaster University Main Campus in addition to off-site locations. These individuals also conduct regular inspections of McMaster property to help better identify any safety-related issues that need to be addressed. JHSCs also make recommendations to Senior Management regarding the identification and control of hazards. These recommendations may include building improvements, procedure implementation, training requirements, policies and programs.



JHSC meetings are monthly and you are paid at your regular hourly rate of pay to attend. At minimum the idea is to be the eyes and ears of the union at these meetings.

You're encouraged to get involved as much as you

want in order to make campus a safer place to work. Some ways of getting more involved include: getting health and safety training, participating in workplace inspections or joining some of the working groups and sub-committees. Attached is a list of vacancies we are trying to fill. If you don't see a position that fits with your work position but you're interested in getting involved get in touch.

Contact me at [healthandsafety@cupe3906.org](mailto:healthandsafety@cupe3906.org) for more information or to get involved.

To be eligible to sit on a committee you need to:

- Be a member of one of the units that have a vacancy
- Work in one of the buildings covered by that committee

**Vacancies exist on the following committees:**

## **Arts (including Social Sciences and Humanities)**

– Kenneth Taylor Hall, Chester New Hall, Togo Salmon Hall, University Hall, 2 temporary classroom buildings.

- Meet every first Monday of the month
- Vacancies for Units 2 & 3.

## **DeGroot** – DeGroot School of Business (DSB)

- Meet every three months on Tuesdays.
- Vacancies for Units 1, 2 & 3

## **Ivor Wynne Centre (including Recreational Services and Kinesiology)**

– Ivor Wynne Centre (IWC) and NFLH

- Meet every last Thursday of the month.
- Vacancies for Units 1, 2 & 3

## **Sciences** – ABB, BSB, GS, HH, Greenhouse, LS, PB

- Meet every first Thursday of the month.
- Vacancies for Units 2 & 3

## **Health Sciences**

- Meet every second Tuesday of the month.
- Vacancy for Unit 2

## **Engineering** – Includes John Hodgins Engineering, ADL, CRL, ITB, TAB, T13.

- Meet every second Wednesday of the month.
- Vacancies for Units 2 & 3

LOCAL NEWS,  
BENEFITS INFO,  
JOB POSTINGS,  
COMMITTEE UPDATES,  
& MUCH MORE!

all on **[www.cupe3906.org](http://www.cupe3906.org)**





# Ontario University Workers Coordinating Committee Conference Report

By: **Blake McCall** - Undergraduate Officer

The annual Ontario University Workers Coordinating Committee (OUWCC) bargaining conference was held in Sudbury Feb 24-27. The OUWCC is made up of almost all CUPE Locals in Ontario on University campuses across the sector, including academic locals and trades and maintenance locals. The focus of the conference this year centred on Health and Safety, Pensions and OCAP/CUPE Raise the Rates Campaign

One of the biggest obstacles Academic workers face surrounding health and safety is the "Student vs. Worker" ambiguity. Where is the line between the two, that is, when does a student stop being a student and become a worker, and what type of obligations does each have? This was a concern that was echoed throughout the conference discussion by several different Locals. A particular concern was expressed by members who teach and research in the same lab space.

There was no easy answer to this, and other questions save the resolve that no matter role we fill we cannot be expected to perform unsafe work. Here at

3906 this can be prevented by working through union to report unsafe working conditions, challenging definitions of "workplace", or by working with other unions on campus to ensure safe working conditions for all.

The increasing size of classrooms is a problem for all Locals. As Administrators try to cram more and more students into tutorial and lecture halls TAs need to understand that this issue is a health and safety hazard. It is the Professor or TA's responsibility to ensure the health and wellbeing of students in these rooms. If something happens that injures a student a Professor or TA can be held responsible for the injury, therefore it is up to the TA to ensure that the rooms they are in are not overcrowded. TAs have the right to refuse to teach overcrowded rooms if they present a danger. Though this might not sound plausible, we heard from Ryerson they took part in a similar refusal to work in their labs, packed with over 22 students, after the Administration tried to increase that number to 24. Ryerson won and there are now no more than 22 students in a lab.

Pension Solvency is an issue that almost every university in the province is facing. This essentially means that pension plans negotiated between unions decades ago have been

underfunded on the employers side. Shockingly, shortfall is often related to employers using extra contributions by workers to meet pension levels; employers have been putting less money in the pension plan than they are obligated to contribute. Over time, this leaves massive debt that universities are scrambling to pay. Besides attacking workers who have these pensions, as can be seen as MAC in the two recent SEIU deals and the 2009 CAW negotiations, this issue also affects funding to nearly every other aspect of the University. The incompetence employers who have not lived up to previous collective agreements affect everyone. University administrators across Ontario are now expecting everyone to be punished equally because of their mistakes. The consensus at the conference was that all Locals whether they have pension plans or not, should be fighting. We should not be expected to pay for the employer's fiscal irresponsibility.

The last aspect of note was the CUPE Ontario's and Ontario Coalition Against Poverty's Raise the Rate campaign. In the 2010 budget Ontario Premier

Dalton McGuinty slashed the special diet allowance. The Special diet is (was) a program that provided a few hundred dollars each month to those on social assistance if their doctor felt they were not meeting standards of nutrition. This was a much needed boost as the current levels of social assistance provides under \$600 to a single recipient and only \$1200 to a single mother with two children. The Raise the Rates campaign is a joint venture that will lobby against and protest these cuts, with the hope of having the Special Diet restored. Expect to see this issue discussed further in coming editions of the ALLY.

In these times of 'austerity' Ontario Universities are organizing against workers, attacking underfunded pensions, sick days, benefits, and pay increases that would off-set the rising costs of tuition and the cost of living. It should be noted that at McMaster, times of austerity still allow the University to announce the construction of a new \$9 million dollar research facility, while new protocol surrounding sick days for food service workers force them to pay out of pocket if they are too ill to come to work. The OUWCC enables Locals to come together and speak about issues like these that affecting all University workers, build and plan of actions, and continue to fight for the right of our members and the working class of Ontario.



# Upcoming Events

## Support Anti-Scab Legislation

Bill 45, Labour Relations Amendment Act (Replacement Workers), was introduced by NDP MPP France G linas (Nickel Belt) last April and easily passed First Reading with a vote of 32 for and three against. The new anti-scab bill will go before the House for second reading on March 31.

The legislation would ban companies from hiring replacement workers to take striking workers' jobs when those workers are involved in a labour dispute, either a strike or lockout.

"Every year thousands of workers across Ontario settle union contracts with their employers without any kind of work stoppage," says UFCW Canada National President Wayne Hanley, drawing attention to the fact that 97% of the province's collective agreements are negotiated without work disruptions.

"But the right to strike is something we need to protect as workers, and as UFCW Canada activists we need to use our strength as the country's largest private-sector union to lead the fight to make sure that our rights aren't watered down by the right-wing agenda," adds Brother Hanley.

A law banning the use of temporary replacement workers has existed in Quebec since 1978 and in British Columbia since 1993. Ontario also gained anti-scab legislation in 1993, when the NDP was in government, but it was clawed back in 1996 when the Mike Harris Conservatives gutted the province's Labour Relations Act.

In order for a bill to become law it must pass second and third reading in the Legislature.

**Join the rally**  
**March 31st - noon**  
**Toronto**  
**Queen's Park**

## Raise the Rates!

It has been 16 long years since Mike Harris cut welfare and froze disability. McGuinty's Liberals have been in power for half that time and done nothing to deal with poverty. In fact people are worse off today. It would take a 55% increase to bring benefits to pre-Harris levels.

Now as the economy continues to slump and the need is greater than ever, this Government is gutting the vital Special Diet Allowance that has enabled people to survive. With no intention of dealing with the crisis of poverty they have created, the Liberals are setting up an 18 month long review of the welfare system to divert us from taking action to challenge them. We don't need a review to tell us we're hungry. What we need is decent income and a 55% increase in the rates now!

UNITED WE EAT DIVIDED WE STARVE

For more information email [politicalaction@cupe3906.org](mailto:politicalaction@cupe3906.org)

**Join the march & rally**  
**April 1st - noon**  
**Nathan Phillips Square (100 Queen St W)**  
**Toronto**

## Support Public Services in the City of Toronto

Rob Ford, newly elected Toronto Mayor, has declared war on public services, and the workers who provide them, in the City of Toronto. Recent attacks on the TTC, waste removal and the Toronto Community Housing Corporation are only the beginning.

WHAT'S AT STAKE?

- Services and programs that serve every resident and community, such as libraries, child care and recreation centres
- TTC serving all neighbourhoods
- Environmental leadership in challenging climate change
- Keeping public control of public services, such as waste removal
- Safeguarding vital public assets, such as housing
- Good jobs and the fundamental rights of workers

For more information check out [facebook.com/RespectToronto](https://facebook.com/RespectToronto) or email [RespectToronto@gmail.com](mailto:RespectToronto@gmail.com)

**Join the march & rally**  
**April 9th - 1-4pm**  
**Dundas Square (corner of Yonge & Dundas)**  
**Toronto**

# Puzzles

## A Birthday with Some "Awesome" People

### A Logic Puzzle by: Valentin Cassano

There is a tendency to think that logic is a boring and useless subject. Au contraire, as I hope to prove, the ability to reason logically can be of great use in some situations. The following is a well-known logical puzzle. I will present it by resorting to a hypothetical situation which, although plausible, never happened.

Here it is: in a bar, sitting at a round table having some drinks, there is a group of people celebrating someone's birthday. There are two kinds of people in that group, those who have "awesome" written on their forehead (the "awesome" people) and those who don't. How that happened is not important, I will leave it to your imagination. The important thing here is that they are not aware of whether there is something written on their own forehead or not. Notwithstanding, every person can see if there is something written in everyone's else forehead or not. In addition, since everyone at a birthday's party wants to be as polite as possible, they do not talk about the way either they or other people look like. Further, as everyone is having a great time with the people at the table, they do not talk to anyone else (except maybe for ordering more drinks). However, if a person finds out that he/she is "awesome", he/she will go immediately (let's say within 2 min) to the washroom to wipe it out; there is no need to brag about that. As there are no mirrors, no other ways of checking their own forehead, they will have to resort to some other way of discovering this. Resuming with the scenario, at some point during the night, the waitress comes to the table with more drinks and says: it is nice to see some "awesome" people here. Assuming everyone at the table reasons logically, what are the consequences brought up by the comment made by the waitress?

I invite you you to take a pause, read the problem thoroughly, and enjoy some time thinking before reading the solution.

**Solution:** Certainly, due to the waitress' comment, there is at least one "awesome" person. If there is a single "awesome" person, he/she seeing everyone else is not "awesome", will go immediately to clean his/her own forehead.

Now, what would be the case if there where exactly two "awesome" people? . Let's call those people Blake and Steve, just to give them some names. Then, Blake will think that the waitress' comment refers to Steve; as he can see Steve is "awesome". Steve, mutatis mutandis, will think the same. However, seeing that Steve has not gone to the washroom after 2 min, he will conclude that there is more than one "awesome" person (why? ). That is, Blake will think: if Steve has not gone to the washroom is because he is seeing an "awesome" person (why? ), as I see no other "awesome" person than Steve, that person

must be me. Hence, Blake will go to the washroom to clean his forehead. Steve will reason in the same way. Thus, after 2 min, both of them will go to the washroom.

A similar argument can be used in case there were three, four or any number of "awesome" people at the party. For example, if there were three "awesome" people, it will take them 4 min to go to the washroom, no sooner, but no later.

## Sudoku Puzzles

from: [printfreesudokupuzzles.com](http://printfreesudokupuzzles.com)

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

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

# **CUPE 3906**

# **Annual General Meeting**

## **including**

# **2011-12 Executive Elections**

**Nominations are open for all positions on the Local Executive:**

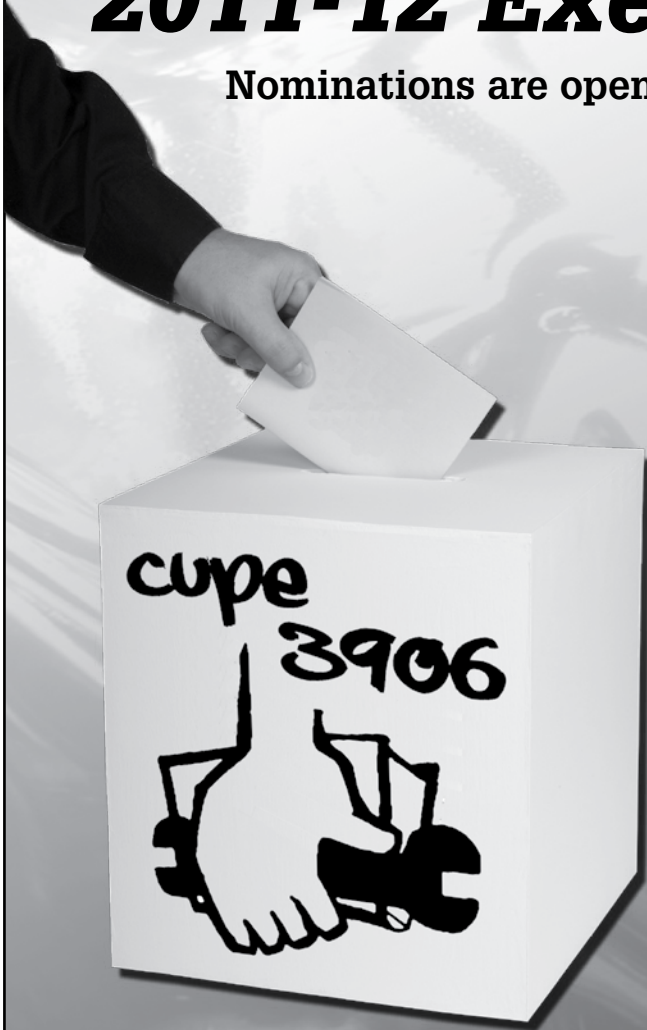
President, Vice President Internal,  
Vice President External, Secretary-Treasurer,  
Recording Secretary, Benefits & Advocacy Officer,  
Communications Officer, Chief Steward Unit 1,  
Chief Steward Unit 2, Chief Steward Unit 3,  
Postings Officer, Grievance Officer,  
International Officer, Equity Officer,  
Undergraduate Officer, Health & Safety Officer

**If you are interested in running for any of these positions, or have any questions about the duties involved please email [president@cupe3906.org](mailto:president@cupe3906.org)**

**April 6th, 2011**

**5:30pm (free food at 5:00)**

**Location TBA**



## **Unit 2 Health Spending Account Increased**

The benefits committee is pleased to announce that the Unit 2 Health Spending Account (HSA) entitlement will be increased to \$400/year on a trial basis. The increase may be adjusted in the future if the claims activity is higher or lower than expected. The decision to increase the HSA was made after a careful review of Unit 2 HSA claims over the past couple of years, which suggested that there was room to adjust the maximum entitlement without exceeding the Unit 2 benefits budget. The increase is effective immediately, and retroactive to January 1st, 2011.

**More information is available at [www.cupe3906.org](http://www.cupe3906.org).**

