

# ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED FACULTY

of

## York University

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Dear Colleague:

I am taking advantage of the issuing of our latest Newsletter to make a personal appeal to you to join the Association of Retired Faculty (ARF), formally constituted early in 1995 after a period of deliberation by many retired faculty.

### **WHY ARF?**

The clawback and capping of post-retirement benefits in 1994 confirmed a widely-shared perception that fundamental decisions affecting the well-being of retired faculty were being taken by a number of University bodies -- YUFA in collective bargaining, the Pension Plan's board of trustees, and the advisory All-University Pension Committee (AUPC) -- without any vigorous and effective representation by or on behalf of retired faculty. ARF emerged to fill the representational vacuum.

### **ARF and YUFA**

Since most of ARF's members had been included in the YUFA bargaining unit, it seemed only sensible to attempt to clarify relationships, and to consider reinforcing and/or establishing institutional links, with YUFA. Matters progressed in 1996 to the point where YUFA amended its Constitution to create the category of Associate Members, to accommodate retired faculty and librarians; and ARF was named as the institutional spokesperson for associate members. These members were, however, made subject to limitations on voting and on filling representative positions on YUFA's behalf. ARF (currently in the person of its President) has also been accorded membership on YUFA's Executive, but without the right to vote. It soon became obvious that these qualifications were self-defeating; and it was agreed mutually that ARF would submit an alternative structure to address the issues of representation and voting rights. An ARF position was discussed and approved in principle by ARF's membership and will shortly be placed before YUFA's Executive.

ARF has lent institutional support to YUFA in a variety of ways: e.g., money, serving on committees and working groups, and actively supporting the YUFA strike, on the picket lines and beyond. Still, we have to recognize that YUFA has to balance the interests of a broad spectrum of constituent interests, involving considerations of age and rank, gender balances, anomalies and equity in all its facets. Given these dynamics, the interests of retired faculty could easily fall among these many stools and be overlooked.

This is why ARF has made many submissions to the YUFA Executive as to how ARF may participate effectively in the forthcoming negotiations over the disposition of the money from the Administration's pension fund contribution holiday: \$4 million over the three-year life of the current Collective Agreement. This \$4 million is the very money out of which any improvement in post-retirement health care (or other) benefits much be made. In the longer term, ARF (and all retired faculty) has a vested interest in the joint YUFA/Administration committee charged by the Collective Agreement to review the entire Pension Scheme. You should appreciate, therefore, why it is in the interest of all retired faculty and librarians to become members of ARF [see form in Newsletter] and to increase the political and bargaining clout of ARF, both in its own right and as an affiliate of YUFA.

#### **What of ARF and YURA (York University Retirees' Association)?**

To the extent that YURA membership is open to all York employees (retired), there is some overlap of membership and interests. But retirement status is not itself a sufficient condition for bridging the pre-retirement and post-retirement community of interests between all the employees of the University. The same logic that led to a distinct Faculty association then holds true now for formation of a distinct association of retiring and retired faculty.

ARF's purpose and objectives, are "to protect, promote and advance the interests and welfare of retired faculty of York University." As the representative body of retired faculty, ARF has, for instance, definite and distinctive views:

- . about the nature of pensions: that they are deferred wages, irrespective of whether the employer contributes a portion unmatched by the future retiree;
- . about the continuing recourse of the Administration to pension contribution "holidays" for itself, and how it wants that "saved" money to be spent;
- . about restoring post-retirement health care benefits to the pre-1994 levels, and about removing the caps that mean your benefits can run out as early as April;
- . and about ARF's right to represent retirees directly wherever they have a stake.

Note, however, that ARF's right to represent its members as a distinct group of employees/stakeholders does not rule out our making common cause with YUFA whenever necessary or desirable.

I look forward to seeing you at the Annual General Meeting of ARF on October 15 from noon to 2:00 p.m., in Sylvester's, in Stong College. Show the Newsletter to the DD lot attendant and park free that day!

*George Eaton, President*