

ARF NEWSLETTER

ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED
FACULTY AND LIBRARIANS
OF YORK UNIVERSITY



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ARF is a formal affiliate organization of York University Faculty Association and consists of those Faculty and Librarians, whether retired or not, who have paid membership dues. Retired Members of ARF are Associate Members of YUFA.



At the Annual General Meeting of October 2001, the following slate of officers was returned, including those subsequently nominated to the Executive to extend its base and representation, as the meeting agreed. The Executive will normally be printed in each edition of the *Newsletter*.



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1. Report on the Annual General Meeting

THE AGM took place on October 25, 2001 and was well attended. Highlights of the President's report included the information that Howard Buchbinder is in Riverdale Hospital, recuperating from a stroke: visitors are welcome. Get well soon Howard! The negotiations between the Administration and YUFA that took place during the summer did not win us the uncapping of our benefit plan, but, as Margaret Knittl reported in the last Newsletter, the Administration agreed for the two years of the contract to increase their contribution from \$300,000 to \$450,000 a year to cover increasing costs, including the on-going costs of the new benefits we secured last February. The Treasurer's report noted that ARF has doubled in size since 1999, but that we still have only about 50% of possible retirees joining, in part because the Administration has refused to give us the lists of retirees, alleging a possible breach of privacy. The meeting approved the payment of annual dues to YUFA, a motion that caused much discussion concerning the kinds of benefits such fees result in, and raising questions about how members could receive the YUFA

Newsletter. [please see the information in Article 8 in this Newsletter]. The President also reported on issues concerning the Pension Plan, and in particular on the Administration's proposed reduction of the increments to pensions by 0.25%. A shift to new mortality tables will help address the losses incurred by the old mortality tables that were used for a number of years (under which we were living too long!). George Eaton reported on the Benefits Trust Fund (see "The Back Burner" article below). The highlighted speaker was the lawyer the Executive has been consulting, Dale Hauser who reported on issues concerning the Pension Plan and the fact that each retiree has signed an individual contract which cannot be changed unilaterally. A further problem is the factual basis of the mortality tables. There was considerable discussion, including the fact that our contracts exist within a regulatory scheme and that the Administration's threat of deregulation of the Pension Plan (and hence the need to accept the .25% reduction) raises serious legal questions and other issues re the Income Tax Act—and no similar kind of Pension Plan has been deregulated. The meeting concluded with the election of officers and votes of thanks to Dale Hauser and Margaret Knittl. The complete minutes will be circulated at the next AGM in the Autumn of 2002. □



2. The Back Burner

IN this occasional column we will report on important projects that are stalled or just waiting to boil. For instance, the Trustees of the Benefits Trust Fund for Retirees have undertaken to fund an

increase of the cap on our dental benefits from \$700 to \$1000 a year. That proposal awaits action by JCOAA (Joint Committee on the Administration of the Agreement). We hope our members' teeth are not falling out while waiting for coverage. Another item is the long-hoped-for and often promised new Health and Dental Information Brochure. A second draft is still in process. □



3. Meeting of Cross-Canada Retirees Planned for Learned in Toronto in May 2002.

MARGARET Knittl has been serving on a joint committee with the University of Toronto and Ryerson Retirees Associations to plan a meeting and reception at the meeting of the Learned Societies which will be held at the University of Toronto this coming May. The date is to be May 31, 2002. More details will follow. One of the spin-offs from these planning sessions is the developing of closer contacts with retired colleagues at sister universities in Toronto, and perhaps the revival of CAERA (Canadian Association of Emeritus Retired Academics) to exchange and disseminate information about colleagues, retirement issues, and university practices and policies. □

4. Missing Copies of the Newsletter Found for the Archive

WE have now completed a full run of the newsletters, thanks to several readers, some librarians, others faculty, all very efficient keepers and filers. Phyllis Platnick, the new ARF archivist, has them, and the treasurer has a second run. Thanks to all who responded. □



5. Survivor's Benefits

ARF has done something about the Administration's disgraceful practice of cutting off the medical and dental benefits of a surviving spouse upon the death of a retiree. It was heartless, caused stress, and was unnecessary as well. Now when a retiree dies, her/his survivor receives a mailing offering the possibility of continuing as a member of the benefits plan for a period of two years, paying the premiums for a single person; thereafter a survivor may choose to continue in the plan upon paying full cost premiums. Other campus unions will be pressing for the same arrangement. □



6. Membership and Members' Generosity.

OUR membership in ARF is currently 180. About a quarter of our members have generously donated money beyond their fees. Some \$884 has been given in donations beyond the regular

MEMBERSHIP DUES

Third Call

Most members of ARF have now paid up their memberships for 2001-2002, though a few are still a little tardy. If you are one of those, this reminder is for you. We do not mail out individual requests for dues, but rely upon the ARF Newsletter to save mailing costs. The treasurer can tell you whether you are paid up or not, with a phone call to Bill Whitla at 416-766-6393. Fees for retirees are \$25 and for Associates (still teaching) \$10. Please include your mailing

membership fees, in amounts varying from \$5 to \$50. Many thanks to all who have renewed memberships and a special nod to those who added a donation. □



7. Note this, all you inveterate travellers, especially if you're over 80!

YOU will already know that the out-of-country insurance available under York's plan is all but useless, a mere \$10,000 over a lifetime. It may be worth your while to do what one colleague has done: take out health and travel insurance from the Ontario Teachers' Insurance Plan. Their "Gold Plan," not the Basic, especially if you are over 80. Yes, that's right: the Gold Plan and not the Basic. Check it out! You get a million dollars worth of out-of-province and out-of-country insurance, and the option of sending other medical bills to whichever carrier, Great West or Teachers, gives you the better deal. Cost for a single person over 65 is currently \$26.94 a month, for a couple \$52.42. For more information, call 1-800-267-6847 and say you are interested in travel insurance. □

—Margaret Knittl



8. YURA, ARF, and YUFA

ALL those acronyms! Most retirees know about YUFA, as former full-time Faculty or Librarians. But perhaps not all are aware of retirees' current status in YUFA (see below). Many of us also have made good use of the excellent seminars sponsored by the Retirement Planning Centre, especially when considering retirement and the programmes of the York University Retirees Association (YURA). But have you joined YURA or ARF? And what

how is ARF different from YURA? What do these three organizations offer a retiree now, and how are they related?

YURA

THE Administration set up YURA when an increasing number of employees from all parts of the university, from support staff, groundspeople, housekeeping, faculty and librarians, as well as people from personnel and management began to retire. It came into being some twenty years ago. Its original constitution stated its purpose: “to enlist and organize retirees of York University to serve in areas of need identified by the Administration in order to contribute to the well-being and excellence of the University.” This too-narrow mandate has been greatly modified in practice and by amendment, so that in a recent brochure YURA highlights four purposes: “to provide a forum for York retirees to discuss common interests; to offer opportunities for networking among members; to foster social, recreational, and learning activities for members; [and] to represent the interests of **all** York retirees to the University, particularly concerning pensions and benefits.” (There are problems with that last clause, as we shall see in a minute). For people living in or near Toronto, the trips to Stratford and the Shaw Festival, walking tours, and the annual Retirees’ Showcase and Sale, as well as educational seminars on financial planning and computer skills, are great attractions. YURA, through the

contributions of its members, also provides scholarship support for mature students. Membership in YURA also enables retirees to use parking vouchers for specific lots at York and Glendon (not available to those still on the York payroll) and to free use of athletic facilities at Glendon and York, with some restrictions. Membership in YURA is \$15, payable in the fine new Retirement Planning Centre, 101 Central Square, near the East Bear Pit (information from the Retirement Planning Centre at 416-736-2100, ext. 66228). The YURA Website is www.yorku.ca/yura. Or you may call Pearl Kroll at 416-736-2100-70664.

The Administration has sponsored YURA from the beginning, giving it office space, a very modest budget, and free printing and mailing. Staff is volunteers.

York’s Administration takes the last clause of YURA’s purposes literally, regarding YURA as the only body that represents the interests of “all” retirees. In one sense “all” retirees are indeed gathered together in YURA, since it includes retirees from every bargaining unit, and from CPM. This very fact, however, means that YURA includes retirees from diverse collective agreements with different benefits, needs, and levels of interest and involvement. Yet the Administration considers that differences can be accommodated by dealing only with one retirees’ organization.

YURA has accomplished much and recently has become very active in working for improved retirement benefits for all of its members. Now it has established a sub-committee on Post-Retirement

Benefits on which ARF is represented. Recent concerns about proposed changes in pension increments brought YUFA, ARF, and YURA together to oppose them. Many members of ARF join YURA also and participate in its meetings and programmes, and a member of each association serves on the other’s executive.

ARF

ARF was established by retired faculty and librarians in the Autumn of 1994 in response to changes announced in a letter from the Administration to all retired faculty members and librarians. Told that their benefits, in place for 10 years, were to be cut back significantly, each retiree had up to two weeks to sign on to the new plan. A new monthly fee was required—formerly there was none—and benefits were subject to a much higher deductible for specified eligible expenses: \$175 for a single person (formerly \$25) and \$275 for a couple (formerly \$50). Dental refunds were reduced from 100% to 65% and 50% to 35%. As a result of these changes, ARF has dealt assertively with pensions and benefits, informing members of current pension and benefits issues, lobbying the Administration in concert with YURA, as well as taking an active role in YUFA’s negotiations for a better collective agreement.

ARF’s objective, as stated in the Constitution, is “to protect, promote, and advance the interests and welfare of the retired faculty and librarians of York University” (Article 2). To that end, ARF has been active in obtaining and publishing information about benefits, improving them, and,

above all, establishing a Benefits Trust Fund for Retirees that administers over \$1 million derived from the retirees' portion of YUFA's allocation after York's last pension holiday. And YUFA added an additional \$100,000 to that fund after the current contract negotiations. The fund is to be used for improving health and dental benefits. ARF and YUFA between them succeeded in negotiating improved benefits for the two years of the current contract (see item 2 in this Newsletter).

But, unlike YURA, ARF has no office space, free printing or mailing privileges, or support or recognition from the Administration. ARF relies entirely on the income generated through membership fees, currently set at \$25 per retiree, and \$10 for Associate memberships for YUFA pre-retirees. Fees pay for the ongoing work of the Association, its newsletter, various meetings, and associate membership in YUFA for all retirees. The current membership is about 180. Although the Administration has hitherto refused to give us (or YURA) the names and addresses of new retirees (or even old retirees), we mail the newsletter free to all retirees that we know about, whether they are paid-up members or not. This service is a means of keeping you informed about pensions, benefits, and other matters concerning retired faculty and librarians.

YUFA

As you know, YUFA currently negotiates matters that directly affect retirees when the

collective agreement is renewed. Retired faculty who are still teaching or retired librarians still working professionally are classified as Senior members of YUFA with the same rights as regular members, except that they may not serve as elected YUFA officers. Other retired faculty and librarians formerly members of the bargaining unit are Associate members. YUFA's By-laws specify ARF "as the representative organization for associate members" of YUFA (By-laws G; sect. 4, 9 Mar. 1999). During talks with YUFA in 1999 it was agreed that ARF would pay a per capita sum for all retirees to have a membership in YUFA. Thereby all fully retired faculty and librarians become Associate Members of YUFA.

Associate members of YUFA may attend and participate in general meetings and attend as observers open meetings of the Executive; Associates may receive (and write for) the YUFA Newsletter and other mailings delivered to a campus address [write to YUFA, 241 Schulich School of Business at York (or e-mail to yufa@yorku.ca), stating that you are an Associate member. Ask to be put on the campus mailing list]. Associates may also submit grievances to the Contract and Grievance Committee. Associates may not vote for strike action, ratification, or be appointed or elected an officer of YUFA, nor may Associates represent YUFA on other university committees. However, ARF may elect one non-voting member to the Equity Committee, and one voting member to the Executive (Margaret Knittl currently), the Contract and

Grievance Committee, and the Nominating Committee (YUFA Constitution, 4: 1, 2, 3, 5). YUFA helped ARF set up the Benefits Trust Fund and members of ARF serve on its Board of Trustees. ARF members have appeared at area and general meetings to bring concerns about pensions and benefits forward. At issue are not only the needs of present retirees, but the conditions for retirement for all members of the bargaining unit (that is, "pre-retirees" in Lee Lorch's happy term for active teachers and librarians—anticipating that they too will soon appreciate the need for better benefits). All these activities have resulted in closer co-operation between ARF and YUFA in the past several years.

With your support, this interesting troika of YUFA, ARF, and YURA has the potential to do even more for York retirees. □

—William Whitla