

OPEN LEARNING AGENCY TUTOR ASSOCIATION

Dear ABE Colleague,

In March of this year a group of Open University Tutors met in Vancouver shortly after the annual Open Learning Agency convocation. Their impetus was a motion at the Open University tutor workshop to look into forming a tutor association.

On Saturday, April 27, 1991 fourteen Open College and Open University Tutors met at the head office of the College-Institute Educators' Association (CIEA) to further discuss the formation of such an Association. The President of CIEA and a CIEA Staff Representative were invited to be present for a portion of our discussion. CIEA had been chosen because it seemed the best of about three unions recommended as possibilities to be the organizing committee. CIEA already represents a majority of B.C.'s college instructors and those familiar with the union will recognize that associations of CIEA retain a high degree of autonomy.

There followed a debate among the Open Learning Agency Tutors and several motions were passed. A motion establishing the Open Learning Agency Tutor Association (OLATA) was carried and a constitution for the organization was adopted. Keep in mind that we need a constitution to satisfy labour law requirements. Any or all of the constitution can be amended democratically at subsequent meetings of the Open Learning Agency Tutor Association. You will find a copy elsewhere in your information package. A further resolution was carried at this meeting which directs the OLATA executive to seek affiliation for the Open Learning Agency Tutor Association with the College-Institute Educators' Association after OLATA is certified as a bargaining unit under provincial labour law.

Why is such activity necessary? Many justifications can be cited but two factors which encourage educators to form faculty unions are especially relevant. One is the restricted or non-existent professional input in the decisions and directions of the organization. The other impetus for a faculty union is to address monetary and working conditions issues.

Here is an example of a working condition issue: the ABE tutors have communicated with the OLA administration in joint letters and discussions their grave concerns about the implications the present OLA "strategic" plan has for our distance learners. The response has been unsatisfactory. This is most distressing because ABE tutors are distance education professionals whose perspectives should carry weight. Our voice is not being heard. We owe it to our students, to the future of distance education in British Columbia, to ourselves, and even to the future and reputation of the OLA that it be heard.

The recent "forgetting" of our 1990 salary increase (note: neither BCGEU employees nor administrators at OLA were "forgotten" in 1990) would indicate a fundamental lack of respect for Tutors. Our method and amount of payment for service defines us as temporary, piece-rate workers. This definition need not be acceptable to you! Formation of a faculty association is a first giant step towards establishing the respect you deserve as a distance education professional.

The OLATA organizing committee recommends that you apply for membership in the Open Learning Agency Tutor Association. If at least 45% of the Tutors of the Open Learning Agency sign up then a supervised Industrial Relations Council (IRC) vote can be held on the question of certification of OLATA under British Columbia labour law.

There have been a number of information meetings set up where you could express your view and, if you wish, joint up:

Greater Vancouver tutors:	7:30 p.m. May 23, 1991 VCC - King Edward Campus Room: 2145
Kamloops tutors:	7:30 p.m. May 30, 1991 Cariboo College Room: A202
Victoria tutors:	10:00 a.m. June 08, 1991 Camosun College Room: 314 (Young Building)
Nanaimo tutors:	2:00 p.m. June 08, 1991 Malaspina College Room: 214

Someone will be calling you with reference to the meetings and the association. If you cannot attend the meetings but wish to join the association please send the \$5 initiation fee and membership application to David Roth, 3029 Carina Place, Burnaby, B.C. V3J 1B4.

Thank you for your attention to this letter, and we hope you will join the association. It seems clear that after a decade OLA has reached a stage in its evolution wherein its teachers must be treated as educational professionals with a voice that must be heard and respected.

Yours,

Gordon Vichert
President

David Roth
Secretary Treasurer

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