

The Steward

September 2011

CUPE 2278
Teaching Assistants at UBC

It's OUR Contract. Let's Make It Better Together

Earlier this month we held our first membership meeting of the fall. We filled the GSS Ballroom and had very frank conversations about how the university sees us. Based on the presentations by the exec and the dialogue with our members, it is clear that extended preference is something that reflects the circumstances of most Teaching Assistants as they complete degrees, which demand more of our time than ever before. As your exec, it is our goal to share information so that you get accurate numbers that let you judge some of the less than fair employment practices that exist at UBC.

For example, did you know that the average completion time for the top Canadian Universities is 6.5 years for PhDs and 4.3 years for MAs? Degree programs are changing; isn't it frustrating when our employer pretends like this research doesn't apply to our labour? Guaranteed preference, which is in our contract because job security helps us balance our budgets, should reflect those numbers.

Want to learn more about this and other issues? We are making a bargaining blog so you can get up to the minute information about what the employer has said to you at the bargaining table. Look out for our blog this October!

Local 2278 - A History of Research

Did you know that your union is over 30 years old? The teaching assistants of UBC, after years of concern over their treatment, banded together in the summer of 1977 to form the ATA (Association

of Teaching Assistants). The goal of the ATA was to unify the TAs across the UBC campus to achieve equitable, transparent, and fair treatment for its members. After meeting regularly for about a year to discuss the issues that mattered most to TAs, the ATA requested meetings beginning in March of 1978 with then UBC Vice-President, Erich Vogt to address and hopefully rectify their concerns. After several meetings with Vogt and the council of deans, it was clear to the ATA that their attempts were going nowhere. The university refused to recognize the ATA as a body that represented the TAs of UBC, and therefore declared that negotiations were impossible.

In January of 1979, after almost a year of frustration in dealing with the University, the ATA set up meetings with union organizing groups such as CUPE and AUCE. A month later, the ATA executive officially recommended to its members that they unionize through CUPE, the Canadian Union of Public Employees. A vote taken at the following membership meeting showed that 71% of the ATA membership supported the move.

In March of 1980, with all the paperwork signed and submitted, CUPE 2278 became the official representative of the TAs of UBC. The union demanded better working conditions, benefits, higher and more uniform pay, a health rebate, and many other benefits that we as TAs enjoy to this day.

Remember, if you want to run for the exec, you must e-mail us to today, Sept 29th, by 6 PM!

Get in touch - www.cupe2278.ca
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