

# *The Educator*

OPSEU  
SEFPO  
FANSHAWE FACULTY

November 2021

## IN TRIBUTE TO *Kay Wigle*

Kay Wigle was a professor and coordinator for 30 years in the Developmental Services Worker (DSW) program who retired in 2019. She also served as the academic staff representative on the Board of Governors and was a steward for Local 110. She died unexpectedly in August of this year.

Kay had an outsized impact on Local 110 and this college, and she will be much missed. She was wonderful to have around, and not just for the work she did. She had a calm demeanor, and that calmness often helped cool down overheated situations and sooth jangled nerves.

Below is a collection of tributes we received. To not get in the way of people's memories of Kay, we've left them as direct quotes.



---

[Darryl Bedford] Kay was involved in some important events in Local 110's history. One was a 1990 arbitration decision that set the precedent that maternity leave is to be included as service towards seniority. The other was a workload resolution arbitration (WRA) that dealt with time spent by Coordinators mentoring non full-time faculty.

Some of the tributes from member mention Kay's dedication and passion for her work. And might I add, it couldn't have been easy for her on Fanshawe's Board of Governors, as she knew the inside of college operations so well yet was simultaneously working at the governance level. Some of the tributes mention the 2017 strike. Again, not easy to be the guardian of strike headquarters, sometimes facing down upset members. But through it all, as serious as Kay was, you could expect that smile, the quick-witted sense of humour, and that laugh. You can see that warmth in the photos we found. Just a great human being and these days it feels we need more like her. You'll be missed, Kay.

(Mark Benner) I was first introduced to Kay in the early 1980s when she was an Adult Protective Service Worker. In this role, she was an advocate for persons with disabilities. Since then, I knew her as my DSW faculty colleague for many years. In this role as well, she advocated for students and faculty. Her drive, dedication, determination, and advocacy in any role she played, made her an outstanding citizen that I am proud to have known.

(*Sarah Ashkanase*) Personally, I have several memories with Kay. I remember her laugh, her willingness to take initiative and show people how to do things around the office – without hesitation. Her passion for helping others. Her no-nonsense demeanor. Her love of her children and the stories she would share. For me, her guidance and support as I explored the union and how I may become more involved. She was a wonderful mentor to me, to fellow faculty, and to her students.

(*Gwen Pelley*) I first met Kay many years ago, a time when I was a student on placement. I remember her being approachable and supportive of the needs of students.

If you were to ask Kay what was most important to her, I would guess it would be her beloved family, her beloved friends, and her role as an advocate for those less fortunate. If she saw any wrongdoings, she was quick to get involved. Because of her strong passion for advocating for others, she leaves behind a large population of those who have and will benefit from her activism.

(*Trudy Kitchen*) I started as support staff in January of 2010 in the School of Human Services (now Community Studies) and worked with Kay until her retirement. I've never met anyone as fierce as her. She was always the first to offer support, defend a colleague or friend and strive to bring out the best in her students. By all accounts, she was one of [the faculty] union's strongest voices. She didn't suffer fools (anyone who knew her will tell you that 😊), but had an immense heart. She was missed when she retired, but knowing we'll never see her again is heartbreaking.

(*Jennifer Boswell*) The image that flashes in my mind's eye when I think of Kay was during the strike of 2017. Kay was in charge of strike headquarters, a high stress, thankless job with long hours during difficult times. It's a job that few want, but a job that must be done. I see Kay, in the office, facing off against a tall, angry man. The situation was tense, and the body language confirmed that. But Kay just had her head angled up, looking the man right in the eyes. Her jaw was set. And you just knew she was not going to back down. I think of Kay as the personification of indomitable. When she was around, I felt more courageous.

Another 'snapshot' memory of Kay is when I tried to take a photo of her for the Educator newsletter. She had authored a piece as the Board of Governors representative and we were putting photos of the authors alongside. She grudgingly agreed to go outside with me to the courtyard, in front of a tree as I wanted natural light and a nice background. Kay, a lovely woman, was so uncomfortable, so reluctant and so leery of having her picture taken I was taken aback. In hindsight I think that Kay was so focused on others, so self-effacing that a photo shoot with herself as the star was truly difficult and unpleasant.

(*Robin Frkovic*) Kay was my colleague on the DSW team and her unlimited energy is something that I think of when I think of her. She could focus when need be but we would joke that she would need to "do laps" around the office sometimes to get out her energy!

She was so proud of her kids and always inquired about other people's children as well. She had a keen interest in lifting people up to their potential and set very high standards for herself also. If you wanted something done, she was the person to go to. She was the first to step up in a crisis. I can remember seeing her at the Union Office during the strike for some long days.

Kay was a team player and advocated for many and sincerely made a difference in the developmental sector. Her passing saddens my heart, and she will be greatly missed by many whose lives she touched. God Bless.

(*Mark Feltham*) For those of us working in strike HQ in 2017, Kay Wigle was our collective compass. As chair of our strike committee, she was up every day at dawn and in HQ first thing to prepare

everything for the first shift of picketers. I always arrived a later, as I tended to stay until around 10:00 PM to clear things out at the end of the day. Such was our division of labour. For a few hours each day, though, Kay and I were in the thick of things together. She was literally at my side at our operations desk in the back room, and although we had been close before, we really bonded during those hours of solidarity. After she retired, I kept in regular contact with her via text and phone. In a year of sadness when we have all lost so much and so many, her untimely death was a particular blow. I wish she were here.



## Kay Wigle

Guide.  
Fierce.  
Calming.  
Indomitable.  
Advocate.  
Team Player.  
Supporter.  
Passionate.  
Energetic.

*...and that great  
laugh.*



*Photos (except for strike photo) by John Sing (RBM Creative)*





## President's Column: Preliminary Stress Survey Results

**By Darryl Bedford**  
**President, Local 110**

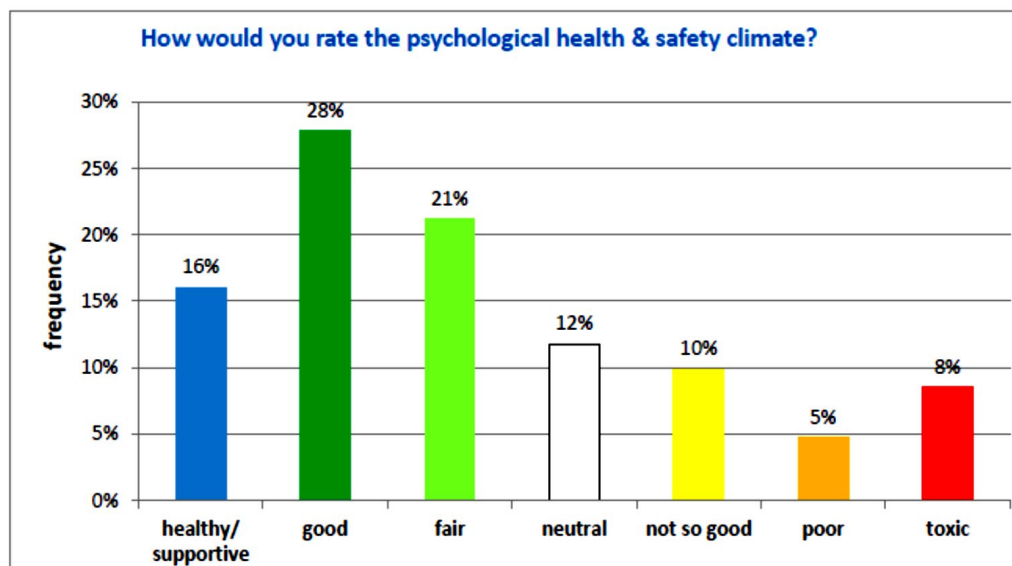
Earlier this year, the CAAT Academic Division of OPSEU asked the Occupational Health Clinic for Ontario Workers (OHCOW) to conduct a survey on stress and mental health among faculty. We have received this preliminary data to better understand the working conditions of our members.

Stress is a significant Health and Safety concern and the results of the survey bore that out. Among the Fanshawe respondents, there were some particular areas of concern:

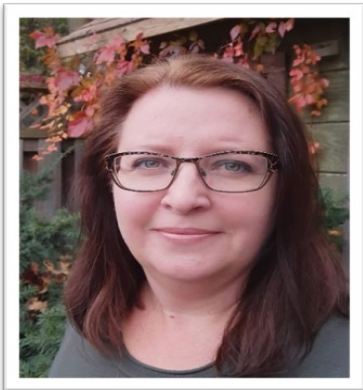
- Emotional Demands
- Recognition
- Supervisor Support
- Justice And Respect
- Work-Life Imbalance
- Burnout
- Sleep Troubles

Racialized workers also reported statistically significant responses.

Overall, only 44% of respondents rated their psychological health and the safety climate of the College as good or healthy.



As soon as bargaining is complete, the CAAT Academic Division will organize a session for the Local 110 officers to meet with OHCOW and to map out an action plan for carrying out solution-focussed work at the college level.



# Professor Precarious: 'Other-than-Full-Time' Faculty Members Speak

By Jennifer Boswell  
2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President, Local 110

***Half-Life: "the time required for any specified property to decrease by half."***

Time is the final unit of measurement when calculating 'half-life'. It is a calculation in chemistry that measures how long it takes a given substance to decrease by half. How does one calculate half life? "Divide in 2 by the decay constant of the substance."

**Time, decay, and division** are fundamental to the concept. The idea of half-life struck me as pertinent in many ways to the work lives of precarious contract faculty at the colleges.

Rather than a chemical substance, imagine that the decaying property is love of teaching. Motivation. Mental wellness. Or the belief that your work-life will one day change for the better.

Half-life also signifies 'less than'. Less than full. Less than complete.

Half measures come up often in language that non-FT faculty use to describe their situation. The most obvious example is this: "I am paid half as a partial-load employee to teach the exact same courses and do the exact same amount of work as full-time faculty" says one colleague. So, the life or career of an "other-than-full-time" faculty—whether partial load, part-time or sessional—is it halved? Less than?

We're talking half pay, or less than half pay. Stop-and-start benefits, if they get them at all. A pension plan they can't afford to contribute to. Even less than half a desk, for chrissakes. As any member of the post-secondary precariat would say, "If we are supposed to be 'partial load' or 'part-time', then why is my work week so @\$%ing FULL?"

The work life of an "other-than-full-time" faculty person is not part time at all. It's nowhere near partial.

## **TIME**

Time is an important unit of measurement in a contract faculty member's work life, for sure. Because the college gets to claim their time without pay. At the start of the year, the contract and pay starts the first day of term. Yet they are supposed to have courses prepped and open several days prior.

Then there's the end of term. Contract ends on the last day of classes. So, what if the class has an exam during exam week? What about the marking, dealing with students, and getting grades in? That's more time the college is getting from a precarious professor.

And then there's the time that is sometimes entirely outside of term, sometimes weeks or months after their contract has ended. A student appeal months later. Work handed in up to six weeks after the course has ended due to a student accommodation. Plagiarism paperwork and email to-and-froing can sometimes carry on long after the contract has ended.

Another untimely request comes in June, when a contract professor may have stopped being paid the third week of April. This is preparing the COMMS for a course, or courses they may have become linked to. It's their baby, curriculum they have developed and care about deeply. If they don't prepare the COMMS, the anxiety and fear that they'll never get to teach it again forces the dedicated to grit their teeth and complete the COMMS with the hope—never a guarantee—that they'll get to teach it again. If they don't do the COMMS, they may end up teaching the course (“oh thank God! I did get it again...”) developed by someone with little-to-no knowledge of the course material, with an outdated or unworkable textbook, or perhaps the right one but without the order having been sent to the bookstore.

Time is also given (or taken) freely with respect to WHMIS or other required workplace training modules. Important divisional and course-related meetings, too. Why should contract faculty go to meetings for which they are not paid? They need to keep informed, of course. Yet another way that colleges rely on the professionalism, dedication and goodwill of precarious faculty to give away their time for free. And there's the ever-present, ghostly hope that perhaps networking and participating will give them a better shot at a full-time position.

All this freely given time and labour are physically and mentally depleting for contract faculty. This is exploitation.

The cliché of the teacher spending evenings and weekends working at curriculum development and marking is reality. For full-time faculty who are well compensated this extra time is seen as part of the job, something they signed up for. There are compensations both monetary and other, like time off during which the salary keeps coming. But there is little or no compensation for the time and labour stolen from precarious contract faculty.

## **DECAY**

Teaching is more than just a job: for most it is a vocation, a calling. Teachers enjoy passing on their knowledge. Being around students is a wonderful boost, a stimulating environment.

What are the longer-term effects of a contract—to four months without pay—to contract career? Anyone who works at a college these days can see the negative consequences that year after year of little recognition, being on the periphery of a workplace, and another unsuccessful attempt at getting hired full-time has on formerly energetic, excited and engaged faculty colleagues.

All this wasted human potential. It's *tragic*. On top of the personal costs suffered by precarious faculty, what a loss for collegiality, the colleges, and students.

When asked whether contract faculty go through a type of Kubler-Ross grief cycle of denial – anger – bargaining – depression – acceptance, one partial-load colleague said that is maybe partly true. If you've been contract-to-contract for 5, 10, or even 20 years, worked at one college or three, of course there is a point at which you have to decide how to handle this situation that's akin to death by a thousand cuts. One colleague said to me that “it may appear that we have accepted our situation because as human beings when faced with daily injustice we have to compartmentalize, and live our day-to-day lives without going insane. So, we teach, year in, year out without saying much and just getting on with the job. But death is final. This situation, we will never accept. The situation *can* change. It *can* get better.”

## **DIVISION**

The number of times the words “isolation” and “fear” came up in my conversations with contract faculty is heartrending.

This pandemic has increased isolation for everyone, but the isolation suffered by precarious contract faculty predates this by far. One person explained it to me in a way I have never considered

from my privileged position as a full-time professor. When you meet someone in the lunchroom or at the photocopier, you never know what you can say to them. Are they full-time or contract? Are they an administrator or support staff? Are they sessional, or part-time, or partial load by choice? Can you complain? Can you seek advice or guidance or empathy from this person? It's a minefield, so you don't go beyond exchanging the most basic pleasantries.

If you're partial load faculty, you can reach out to the union and ask them for help and advice. Usually the person reaches out on their own, isolated and desperate. But guess what? Union stewards and officers can listen, empathize, and advise—but the rights you have as a union member often aren't, or can't be exercised because of your precarious position. It's a terrible Catch-22. (This will be the topic of another article.)

This hierarchical division of colleagues in the same workplace is terrible and destructive. At the top of the food chain, full-time or salaried workers don't have to worry about who they talk to and to some extent, what they say. But if you're on contract, genuine and truthful interaction with your co-workers can be hazardous.

Keeping contract faculty members divided, isolated and fearful works extremely well in to perpetuate this unequal and unjust system.



In some ways, it seems like we've regressed one hundred years with respect to employment conditions. For the employee, precarious employment yields half the returns secure employment does, for double the work. I include the psychological burdens of insecurity, poorer mental health, and fewer protections into this measure of doubled work.

It is self evident that in a wealthy modern society, secure jobs are needed for people to raise or care for family, secure decent housing, and live whatever they deem to be a happy life.

Fighting and reversing the growth of employment precarity and inequity is a vital struggle of our time.





# Boss Level:

## Why You Can Stop Worrying and Love Your Collective Agreement

**By Mark Feltham**  
**Chief Steward, Local 110**

Have you been told that you did something “Like a boss!”? Did it make you feel proud? Accomplished? The simile indicates a high degree of swaggering competence. Indeed, the word “boss” itself carries overwhelming weight. It suggests a subordinate relationship for all non-bosses. Perhaps some people are “underbosses” or “sub-bosses”—the very use of these prefixed terms makes the point. Ultimately, however, whatever term is used, being the boss implies being in charge, and this brings me to Article 6 of our Collective Agreement.

Article 6, known as “management functions,” is our boss article. It states, among other things, that it is the “exclusive function of the college” (and its personification in its hierarchy of bosses from the president on down) to “manage the college and, without restricting the generality of the foregoing, the right to plan, direct, control operations, facilities, programs, courses, systems, and procedures, direct its personnel . . .” and so on and so forth. You get the idea: “management” is the boss. In fact, the job classification for professors (but, oddly, not the ones for counsellors or librarians) starts with the covering statement that everything a professor does is “under the direction of the senior academic officer of the college or designate.” Put another way, Article 6 and its related threads identify the college as “the boss.”

These words might quite reasonably lead someone to think that everything about their work and its conditions is at the absolute mercy of the boss’s will—indeed, perhaps even to the boss’s capricious whims. Fortunately, such a condition of maximized subservience and precarity is not actually the case.

Although even the most precariously employed gig worker has some legal protections, via *the Employment Standards Act* and the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, for example, their ability to access them is often highly compromised. However, with a collective agreement, the level of protections sharply increases. Article 6—the boss article—is only part of a single page in the collective agreement. There are 131 pages in the collective agreement, and everything that’s not Article 6 outlines and defines your rights and protections.

These rights and protections only work if you use them, and doing so can be especially hard for our precariously employed partial-load faculty, let alone our part-time and sessional faculty who remain without a bargaining agent because of legal action by the College Employer Council. That’s why we’re here! As your 110 officers and stewards, we can advise you, support you, and if necessary, vigorously advocate for you with your employer. Local 110’s motto is this: “You educate. We advocate.” We work hard to meet the obligations of these words every day. Each of us can move towards our own boss level through our active engagement with and assertion of our hard-bargained contractual rights. Is our CA perfect? Of course not. That’s why we also bargain for better on your behalf. And this is why we can stop worrying and love our collective agreement.



# Local 110's History Corner

## Local 110's 1977 Referendum: A Lesson in Solidarity

By Frank Green  
(Special Contributor)

After being elected Chief Steward in the new OPSEU Local 110 at Fanshawe College back in the Spring of 1976 I set about learning how to do the job. My union experience to that time was limited to being one of the representatives at the main campus in the CSAO Faculty Branch for one year. With four other members, I attended a week-long workshop at the University of Guelph on how to be a union steward. More importantly, Ross Rachar gave me a running tutorial on the meaning of the collective agreement and how to be a steward. Based on his teaching I wrote a short "Guidelines for Stewards" for the other new stewards in Local 110.

The experience was similar to that a teacher might have when assigned a new course on very short notice and trying to keep a little ahead of the students. Ross' wisdom can be seen in one section called the Crying Towel Rule: "If a member repeatedly brings a complaint to the steward but refuses to take the appropriate steps (complaint to chairman, grievance or referral to workload committee, etc.), for the sake of efficiency and your own sanity, invoke the Crying Towel Rule. Simply point out that you cannot help the member unless he is willing to take the appropriate steps," and offer to supply a towel to absorb the tears.

### FUNS

Beginning in September, 1976, I was teaching half a full assignment and thanks to local dues, was freed up to devote the rest of my time to union work.

Ross always stressed that the key to building solidarity among the membership was effective communication through meetings and written means. This was something I strongly agreed with from my experience in various organizations. It also seemed to me that newsletters could be sent to all members whereas meetings only drew a percentage of the members. Hence a newsletter was high on my list of priorities and I sent the first one on September 2, 1976. It explained the new steward system, had some instructions about checking ones timetable and cautioned the members not to evaluate or supervise another member of the bargaining unit since this was contrary to the management rights clause in the collective agreement. There was also a list of businesses where union members could get a discount. (From the start, Ross acted as informal editor.)

Local 110 paid a member of Local 109, Doreen Wiles, to do the typing and run off copies on a Gestetner outside of her college work hours. Later the copies were printed and assembled at M&T printers at the base of First Street. I would then send sufficient copies for each division or department to the stewards who would distribute them. Thanks to Doreen's excellent work and the cooperation of all the stewards, this system worked well.

Gradually the issues became more controversial as examples of bad treatment of faculty members were reported as a warning to others. Beginning with the fourth newsletter, the newsletters were marked "Confidential to Members, Local 110, OPSEU" to allow for more complete explanation to members (An unintended consequence of this confidential labeling was that the newsletters seemed to become required reading for administrators.)

In those days Fanshawe College issued a publication called FANS from the Office of the President once a week. It contained administrative notices. From the fifth issue of the Local 110 newsletter, it was named FUNS for Fanshawe Union Notices, "issued from the desk of the Chief Steward (since) in spite of repeated requests since early July, the Union has been unable to rent office space from the College." FUNS No. 6 announced the rental of a union office in the college.

As the school year went on, the issues dealt with in FUNS became more serious and, at times, more pointed: such things as excessive weekly workload assignments, the college's attempt to split teachers' vacation period at the discretion of the college, the lack of proper evaluation, especially of probationary teachers, unfair layoff practices, failure of the college to abide by its own policies and to keep agreements reached by college and union representatives at the College Committee, and the keeping of secret files on teachers (in addition to the official personnel file which faculty members had the right to inspect and, if necessary, correct). All of this could be summarized as a rather arbitrary style of management, at least in the eyes of the union local.

Admittedly, FUNS sometimes took on a satirical tone, as when a chairperson had admitted to the Chief Steward and another steward to keeping secret files on teachers, and Senior Administration refused to unequivocally stop the practice. At that point, FUNS #13 on March 14, 1977 consisted in a one-page cartoon showing 12 different varieties of personnel files and with the college coat of arms and its proud motto INTEGRITY looking the worse for wear. The cartoon was, of course, marked confidential to members of Local 110, OPSEU.

## **A WIDER AUDIENCE**

At that time the London Free Press had more reporters than at present and one reporter was assigned exclusively to cover news at UWO and Fanshawe College. In the Spring of 1977 a reporter named Joanne Ramondt phoned to ask if she could interview me about union matters at Fanshawe. I agreed to the interview since I believed that what I had written in FUNS was true and based on factual and provable evidence, i.e., I did not publish without having written evidence or reliable witnesses. I also obtained permission from the faculty member before publishing anything about a problem that member was having.

On April 26 Ms. Ramondt's article appeared under the headline "'Fear' at Fanshawe." In it I attributed the fear to arbitrary management practices, particularly regarding layoffs and evaluation of teachers. "College administrators have two things to abide by in dealing with us, the collective agreement and college policy. All we're asking is that they abide by their own rules," Green said.

"Release from duty for union activity. Green says that despite the fact that the provincial union pays the college for a teacher's time when the teacher is involved in (provincial) union activity, the college still requires the teacher to make up the lost time. This rescheduling, the union states, is usually at the most awkward time for both the teacher and the students."

The article went on, "Ross Rachar, past president of Local 110, calls the problems, 'the worst of laissez-faire management.'"

"The management style at Fanshawe, Rachar says, consists of each department chairman having his own little fiefdom."

"There are guidelines and recommendations that come down from top management but there is no real edict from the president that's considered binding."

"It's a lack of leadership that's creating many of these problems," Rachar said."

“John Crook, President of Local 110, says the administrative practices tend to ‘stretch the limits of fair play.’”

“As far as teacher-performance evaluations are concerned, Crook said that since many of the chairmen who are to make the evaluations haven’t taught, ‘one wonders if they’re the best persons to be doing the appraising.’”

When the article was published, it caused a good deal of consternation at the college, including among some faculty members. In FUNS on April 29 the following paragraph appeared: “No doubt most members have read the April 26 article about problems at Fanshawe. After receiving a number of issues of FUNS (from a source unknown to me) the reporter phoned John Crook, Ross Rachar and me as well as some College Administrators. Since the reporter already had a good deal of information and because we believe strongly in the importance of the issues, the correctness of our position and the urgent need to improve the situation, the Union representatives freely answered the reporter’s questions. While we share the regret of many members over potentially bad publicity for the College, we do not fear public scrutiny of our position on the issues.”

Most members of Local 110 seemed to approve of our decision to speak publicly about problems at the College, so from that time on, I did not hesitate to speak openly to the media, whether print, radio or, occasionally, TV.

## **FANS VS FUNS**

After a notice appeared in FANS criticizing FUNS and alleging that it distorted facts but provided no proof for this assertion, the executive officers of Local 110 issued the following statement to Local 110 members:

“In the April 29, 1977 issue of FANS a Notice appeared which commented adversely on FUNS. The executive of Local 110 deplores this Management interference with confidential union memos from a Union official to the members. We consider this to be a blatant attempt to single out for attack one member of the executive and to decide what members have the right to read -even in confidential Union memos.”

“This latest of many arbitrary actions has led us to decide, unanimously, to ask the Minister of Colleges and Universities to investigate problems at Fanshawe College. We strongly urge you to contact the Honourable Dr. Parrott, either by sending the attached form letter, or with your own letter of concern.”

Signed by John Crook, Pres., Mike Grunwell, 1st VP, William Aarts, 2nd VP, Bob Wilson, Treasurer, Anna Wilson, Secretary, and Frank Green, Chief Steward.

## **FAKE NEWS AND LORD HAW HAW MEETING IN THE SPRING OF 1977**

Shortly after the Board of Governors approved the annual budget for the next year, the President of the College called what in the army is referred to as an “all ranks” meeting, i.e., all levels of administration, faculty and support staff were invited. D1060 was filled to capacity. (The fact that

members of faculty and support staff were in the presence of all their bosses, from immediate supervisor to president, made for a somewhat intimidating atmosphere.)

The President began by announcing that Chip Martin, a reporter with the Free Press, had asked if he could attend the meeting. When the question was put to the meeting, the vote was to allow the reporter to stay.

The President said that it was usual to have such a meeting at this time of year. He felt that the college was "in good shape" with no layoffs of permanent staff scheduled, applications up and placement good. There just seemed to be complaints from a few critics.

The President then set the tone by telling two stories. One was about a media report in Toronto that someone from Manitoba had made a million dollars in wheat. Then it turned out that he was from Saskatchewan. Later it was learned that the money was made in potash. Further still, it emerged that it was half a million, not a million. Then we learned that the money was lost, not made.

The second story was about the time in 1944 when the President was a prisoner of war in Lithuania and was forced with the other POWs to listen to the infamous Lord Haw Haw on the radio reciting bad news about allied forces' defeats. At first the prisoners were depressed by the bad news, but then the good sense and perspective of wiser prisoners prevailed and hope was restored that in a week, a month or a year the war would be over and the prisoners would all be safely home.

("Lord Haw Haw" was the nickname given to William Joyce who was born American and raised in Ireland. After broadcasting Nazi propaganda from Germany throughout World War II to Britain and America, he was captured after the war and hung by the British as a traitor.)

At one point in the meeting, I asked the President to provide evidence of distortion of facts in FUNS. He didn't do so but said he thought there was a lot of distortion there. The Vice President Academic acknowledged that the college had not followed all requirements of the policy regarding the evaluation of a probationary employee but he still felt that the dismissal of that employee was justified. He did not refer to another probationary employee who had never been evaluated and who was pressured by her superior into resigning 100 days before her probationary period was up.

In general, the President did a masterful job of swaying the meeting in favour of his view of the healthy state of the college and his condemnation of critics. He received enthusiastic applause a number of times. While I can't recall specifically receiving boos, (perhaps having blocked them out?) there was no doubt of the meeting's disapproval of my views. Most damning for me was the emphatic statement by a faculty member sitting somewhere behind me that the union, while no doubt meaning well, had greatly exaggerated any problems that might exist in the college. It felt like a knife in the back.

While the meeting ended on a buoyant mood as the President urged everyone to attend a college dance at the German Canadian Club that evening, my mood driving home was somewhat less than chipper as I contemplated having a rather short career in union work and tried to resist an urge to scratch a persistent itch that I felt around my neck.

## **MIKE'S IDEA**

Over the weekend Mike Grunwell, 1st Vice President of Local 110, phoned me to offer very



welcome support. He also suggested an excellent idea: that the officers of the local should request a vote of confidence from our members to find out if we enjoyed the support of a majority of the members or not.

When we were back at work on Monday, the other officers, John Crook, Bill Aarts, Bob and Anna Wilson agreed that we should adopt Mike's idea and hold a referendum of all the members of Local 110 asking them to vote either confidence or non-confidence in the Executive Officers.

On May 26, 1977 a three-page memo entitled "STATE OF THE UNION," which explained the reason for the vote of confidence and signed by the six officers was sent to all 450 members of the local. It was accompanied by an addressed envelope and ballot which was to be marked and signed by the member and mailed to Mr. P. Kolbaska, President of the London and District Labour Council. This gentleman would count the ballots and indicate to the Executive Committee of Local 110 whether or not it enjoyed the confidence of the membership. Members were given three weeks to return the ballots.

If more than 50% of all of the members of the local supported the Officers, they would serve out the rest of their term. If not, they would quietly resign after arranging an election for new officers.

The memo explained that the officers believed the vote of confidence was necessary because at the "all ranks" meeting the majority of those present had given loud support to the President of the College in his attacks on union officials.

A short time after the ballot was sent to the members, I learned that the "all ranks" meeting had been taped by the college without the knowledge of the attendees. When I asked the administrator of the A/V Department if the union could have a copy of the tape, he said "Sure." Then an hour later, he phoned me to say that the President would have to approve the handover of the tape. Of course, that approval never materialized. Also, I felt obliged to report the secret taping of a controversial meeting to the members. (At that time Nixon's secret taping in the Watergate era was still fresh in people's minds.)

On June 8 in a special issue of FUNS, 1st VP Mike Grunwell explained that the Unemployment Insurance Act, 1971 provided for rebates to employees due to premium reductions. Under these provisions, the Sick Leave and Long-Term Income Protection plans in force at Fanshawe College had received appreciable premium reductions since 1971. But the rebates had not been passed on to employees as required by law.

After Mike discovered this in August, 1975, on behalf of the local union executive he had been trying to get the College Personnel Office to pay the rebates (estimated at \$45-50 per faculty member). So far, his efforts had been stalled.

Mike's final sentence was, "We will keep you informed on further developments if we are still in office in September."

## **RESULTS OF CONFIDENCE VOTE**

June 20, 1977 John Crook (father of English Professor Lorraine McNeil and an inveterate punster) sent the following President's Union Notice (PUN) to Local 110 members:

We have received, from the London and District Labour Council, an unofficial count of the ballots cast in our referendum. The results are as follows:

Support 268

Non-support 6

Spoiled 4

Total ballots cast 278

The number in support of the Executive is approximately 60% of the membership and well above that required for a majority.

On behalf of the Executive, I would like to thank the members for their vote of confidence, and I state that we will continue to serve all members to the best of our ability.

We issue an invitation to all members, especially those who may not support us, to see us personally about your Union concerns or to come to our future general meetings and participate there. In this way we may respond to your needs and concerns better.

I would also like to thank the London and District Labour Council, the Retail Wholesale Union and particularly Peter Kolbaska and Don Collins for their assistance in carrying out the vote and ensuring its impartiality.

So that the ballots will remain secret, but be available if the results of the vote are challenged, all ballots will be retained in a sealed container or envelope until our present term of office expires.

John Crook

President, Local 110, OPSEU

In spite of John's memo, FUNS #25 found it necessary to make the following comment on September 13, 1977:

The 5% Solution

(In a Sept. 6, 1977 speech) more than once the President of the College quoted a faculty member who stated in a meeting last May that 95% of the faculty is quite happy with the way things are at Fanshawe. Only 5% are discontent... Neither the President nor the faculty member has revealed the basis for this particular statistical analysis...

One might have thought that the "three or four Union troublemakers" theory would have been laid to rest on June 17, 1977 when 268 faculty members (60%) voted confidence in the Executive of Local 110... Anyone who wishes to verify these results can do so by phoning the London and District Labour Council at 438-0222.

## **A TURNING POINT**

Looking back now more than 40 years to Local 110's referendum in 1977, it seems to me that the solidarity of support for the Executive of that time represented a turning point and a big step forward for the local. For many years following that event the leaders of Local 110 could count on two-thirds or more support for major decisions like contract and strike votes.

A short time after the referendum, the Fanshawe faculty was grateful to Mike Grunwell when we all received a modest but welcome rebate from the college on our overpayment of premiums. In addition, there was no doubt in my mind that Mike had saved my neck.

# Looking for something?

If you are looking for information about your Local 110 Faculty Union, or about current or past union events, try the links below.

Local 110 Homepage: <https://www.opseu110.ca/>

Bargaining Updates: <http://www.opseu110.ca/bargaining-updates/>

News & Views: <https://www.opseu110.ca/news-and-views/>

## We are here to listen!

If you have questions, concerns, or feedback we would love to hear from you.

You can reach us at [union@opseu110.ca](mailto:union@opseu110.ca)

You are also invited to join our Zoom Coffee Chats on Fridays at 10am.

A casual conversation time where we can discuss issues of concern and interest.

The meeting link is emailed each week.



**CANADIAN ASSOCIATION  
OF LABOUR MEDIA**

Authorized for distribution:  
Darryl Bedford, OPSEU 110 President

## Have an idea for an article?

Please contact Anjanie McCarthy, acting Secretary, at [secretary@Opseu110.ca](mailto:secretary@Opseu110.ca)