

GTFF official discusses contract issues

The scheduling of a second strike vote by the members of the Graduate Teaching Fellows Federation (GTFF) has provided me with an opportunity to respond to some of the points raised by President Boyd in his letter to the Emerald last Thursday.

The closeness of the first vote underscores the importance of the unresolved issues for a large majority of the members of the GTFF.

To begin, it should be clear that the dispute is now over the issue of salary and health benefits for GTFFs. The Union is negotiating a retroactive two-year contract which would begin Sept. 15, 1977, and run through Sept. 15, 1979.

The Administration has proposed a three step salary increase consisting of a 4.25 percent raise Sept. 15, 1977, 4 percent April 1, 1978, and an additional 5 percent effective Sept. 15, 1978. When compounded, those three raises would amount to an increase in the salary base rate of 13.84 percent.

It is important to note, however, that because the increases are

staggered over the two year period, the increase in the actual wages received by GTFFs amounts to only 9.38 percent. Inflation has been running at a rate of over 10 percent per year for the past two years. The Administration is, in effect, asking GTFFs to accept a 10 percent pay cut.

The Union, in the interest of reaching a settlement, has agreed to accept the first two increases proposed by the Administration, but has proposed a flat \$40 per month increase effective Sept. 15, 1978, in lieu of the Administration's 5 percent. The \$40 could be used by individual GTFFs to purchase health insurance for themselves and their dependents.

The difference between the Administration's and the Union's proposals amounts to about \$200 per GTFF. When multiplied by 750 GTFFs, that comes to approximately \$150,000, although the Administration claims that the actual difference would be closer to \$230,000.

The Union has yet to receive a

detailed explanation of how the Administration arrived at its figure.

The main argument being advanced by President Boyd and his negotiators is that GTFFs at the University of Oregon are now being paid at one of the highest hourly rates in the country and deserve no further increases. The former may very well turn out to be true, if, after the contract is signed, workloads are reduced so as to correspond to the actual levels of appointment.

Many if not most GTFFs are now working well over 12 hours per week for a .30 FTE (full-time equivalent) appointment, and more than a few work twice that much. The Union does expect to be able to reach some kind of agreement on the workload issue.

The point that is not brought out in President Boyd's letter is that TAs at other universities comparable to Oregon receive a substantially higher net compensation for the duties they perform. Most other schools employ their teaching assistants half-time, or about

20 hours per week.

According to the Administration's own survey, TAs at the nine University of California campuses received a net compensation of between \$5,000 and \$6,000 for nine months in 1977-78, including tuition. According to the Administration's proposal on salary, GTFFs at the University of Oregon would receive between \$2988 and \$4747 as well as a tuition waiver amounting to about \$1000 or \$1300 for the same period. Many GTFFs, working without a contract, worked over half-time that year.

The issue for GTFFs at this university is not one of rate of pay but of net compensation, that is, the total amount of money that they have to live on. That total has been declining steadily each year because salary increases have not kept up with inflation.

Graduate students deciding whether to come to Oregon or go to some other school look at the

total rather than an hourly rate. It should also be noted that the vast majority of GTFFs are also full time students and do not have the time or energy to take on an additional job, and do not, as some administrators have suggested, receive supplementary income from parents or other relatives.

The real question is whether or not the University is going to pay its teaching fellows a liveable wage. The only answer we have received so far is not this year and probably not in the future.

It should be kept in mind that we are bargaining in a state whose government has accumulated a \$262 million budget surplus while continuing to underfund higher education. The problem is indeed one of priorities, and the question that students, GTFFs and faculty members should be asking themselves is why is it that education is no longer the highest priority of this society?

Charles Aker
President, GTFF

Urges 'no' vote

Brothers and Sisters of the GTFF

I write to urge you to reject a strike in this week's balloting. I do this knowing your frustration and anger at a University Administration which has consistently refused to treat us with respect and fairness. I share these feelings.

I also know that this University is far more than the Administration. Unfortunately, we can not strike against the Administration only; we must withhold our services from the entire University community, and in turn from the larger community which the University is intended to serve.

The decision to stage such a strike ought not to be made on the basis of strong feelings alone, but rather with some reasonable expectation of its practical effect.

I believe that we have little to gain and possibly much to lose by striking at this time. Wages, of course, represent the remaining major point of disagreement between us and the Administration.

The Administration does not appear to have bargained with us in good faith on this issue. Nonetheless, the cash difference between their offer and that of the fact-finder is about \$200 gross for the average .30 GTFF for the entire 2 year period of the contract. The difference is less for higher salaried GTFFs at appointments above .30.

If a successful strike were to last at least two weeks, we could probably do no better than break even financially, because of wages withheld during the strike.

Given the disruption to the University and the not improbable ire of a penny-pinching populace and Legislature, I conclude that we will strike only if we let our anger at the Administration rule our judgement:

Our negotiating team has won us significant gains in workload, in grievance procedures, in appointment and re-appointment. The contract which the Administration is now willing to accept is in many ways a good one and should be viewed as a win for the Union.

I believe we should close ranks and implement the positive provisions of this contract. With a working contract, we should be able to increase our numbers to include a significant majority of all GTFFs. This will give us far more leverage in this Spring's negotiations for our contract to begin next September.



Our team will then be able to focus more on the issue of wages, having settled much already. I believe that we will also then be far better equipped to wage a successful strike, should one be necessary. Remember that nothing now can damage our Union more than an unsuccessful strike.

Finally, I want to thank the GTFF negotiating team for the long, hard, and successful work it has done for us all. I don't share your view of the value of a strike. But I am for the Union. Should the membership vote to go out, I will be there with you on the line.

Russell Becker
GTFF, foreign language lab

Support GTFF

As undergraduates we should feel it our responsibility to protect the members of GTFF. At this time that protection can take the form of letters addressed to Pres. Boyd and keeping a watchful eye on the GTFF - University negotiations.

Strike or no strike, GTFF deserves student support for the following reasons: (1) a good percentage of all lower division classes are taught directly by GTFFs; (2) although GTFFs teach, they are primarily students, like ourselves, and are entitled to our support when in the right - as we believe they are here; (3) it is obvious and generally agreed upon that the pay offer tendered by the University is down right unfair.

The administrative officers of this school are by and large businessmen, which is fine in that it takes good business minds to keep an institution of this size functioning; what is amazing about Pres. Boyd's stance regarding pay increases for GTFFs is that he overlooks a fundamental business axiom, that is, you can't get sumthin' for nuthin', or next to nothing which is what GTFFs currently get.

We are genuinely surprised that the people who run this school overlooked such a fundamental and essential component in our education as GTFFs when University "priorities" were set up.

As a result of the administration's ignorance and/or lack of foresight, students are put into a position where they have to support a GTFF union that just may have to strike.

A second strike vote will be conducted by members of the GTFF tonight. We wholeheartedly urge students to get behind GTFF whatever the outcome of the vote.

Respc. Subm.,
John Cremer ASUO Staff

Gary McMahon SUAB Chairman

GTFFs need help

The undergraduate students on this campus need to become more aware of the points of dispute between the GTFF and the university administration. We need to recognize exactly how this dispute concerns us, and what interest we have at stake.

When we come to the university, we come to learn. We bring a mature attitude, and we know that the process of education is rooted in mutual cooperation between students and instructors. This cooperation is precious, and should be regarded as essential to a quality education.

For almost two years, some of our instructors have been struggling against the university administration, fighting for decent working conditions. Undergraduates, this is our fight, too! The student body must take an active role in support of the Graduate

Teaching Fellows Federation. We share a mutual struggle toward a common goal: quality education.

On every remaining point of dispute in the negotiations, the interests of undergraduate students lie clearly with the GTFF. The disputed points are in fact necessary conditions of quality instruction:

1) *objective criteria for appointment and reappointment* — Fair hiring and rehiring practices will also assure a high standard of instruction.

2) *salary*, and

3) *workload* — GTFFs are currently overworked and underpaid, and this directly affects the quality of education we receive. When a GTFF is forced to work an outside job to support children and pay for health insurance, this means less time available to prepare lectures, and fewer open-office hours.

This may not concern the university administration, but it concerns undergraduate students!

4) *childcare* — This need is shared by the entire university community, as the amount of organized childcare currently available is insufficient. GTFFs, students and staff alike must demand campus childcare services.

The strength of the GTFF, as that of any union, lies ultimately in the power to strike. The exercise of this power may prove necessary, due to the university administration's obstinance in meeting the just demands of the union. The decision whether to strike will be made when the GTFF meets this evening.

In the event of a strike vote, we must give our full support. Quality is the key issue for undergraduates, and therefore the strike is in our own interest, too.

Student must stand side by side with instructor, and together win the working conditions necessary for quality instruction. Join the struggle! Support the GTFF!

Ronne Blanton
junior, biology

Sonja Lucky
sophomore, sociology

Scott Myers
sophomore, linguistics

Terry Vaughan
junior, political science

for the GTFF
Student Support Group