

GTFs need support in bargaining talks

As the talks between the Graduate Teaching Fellows Federation and the University head into yet another round, the controversy is still far from resolved.

After a mediation session Wednesday, GTFFF administrators were pleased, but said they still had not gotten what they wanted.

The whole issue began in the spring, when negotiations started over a new contract. After six months, nothing has happened and nothing has been solved. Now the GTFFF is considering picketing the campus, and a GTF strike is not out of the question.

The controversy focuses on two issues: wage increases and health benefits. The GTFs want a 5 percent increase each year for the next two years. The University is offering a 6 percent increase total for the next two years.

The health benefit issue is more complex. GTFs are not included in University faculty health insurance programs. Until this year, GTFs could purchase student health insurance on a month-to-month basis, as opposed to a one-time payment.

The University wants to do away with the monthly payment program. GTFFF wants some type of insurance benefits.

On this, and the wage increase, we side with the GTFFF.

GTFs are some of the most overworked and underpaid people in the world. In addition to attending school, they have to teach, research, advise and grade papers in literally hundreds of University classes. For this they make a total of \$469.53 a month.

The University has screamed it has no money to fulfill the GTFs' demands. Perhaps. But certainly there was money in the Oregon State System of Higher Education budget at one time — for instance, before the renovation of McMorran House. The \$100,000 spent to repair the mansion would have gone a long way toward helping the GTFs.

A 6 percent wage increase over two years is no increase at all. With inflation running at over 4 percent a year, a 3 percent increase per year is a reduction, not a raise.

On the subject of health benefits, \$469.53 barely covers the rent, let alone health insurance payments.

GTFs are teachers, they are faculty members, they should be treated as such.

Any state system administrator who denies the GTFFF their wage increase and benefits should take a look at the University's classes. Between 25 and 40 percent of the classes are taught by GTFs.

If the GTFFF decides to strike, the University will be virtually paralyzed.

Nobody wants a strike. It would be unfair to the students who shell out hard-earned money for tuition. They pay for a quality education, they should get nothing less. If the University doesn't help the GTFs, the quality of education will nosedive.

Support the GTFFF.



Education summit hasn't produced much

George Bush has labeled himself everything from the "environmental president" to the "drug-fighting president" and finally the "education president."

We saw him blunder on the environmental issue (remember the Valdez?), and the jury is still out on his drug plan. Now it's time for Bush's educational policy to come under fire.

This Wednesday, Bush opened an education summit with governors from around the country. It's too early to tell what — if anything — will come out of this conference, but the preliminary word is that Bush is going to have a hard time getting the governors to swallow his education reform package.

We believe Bush is sincere in trying to change America's educational system. This summit is the first between a president and the state governors. His administration certainly has experience in education. Drug czar William Bennett was Reagan's Education Secretary, and the current secretary, Lauro Cavazos, is widely respected.

But actions speak louder than words. The United States educational system is falling apart. Drug use is rampant in grade schools and high schools, standards for

teaching have fallen, and drop-out rates increase daily.

So far, all we've heard is rhetoric. The only concrete proposal on the table is for parents to send their children to any public school they choose.

This plan, backed by the Bush administration, has gotten good reviews from some of the governors at the conference. But so far it has not gotten the support such a wide-ranging plan needs to succeed.

While Bush has focused on grade and high schools, the governors have asked for more emphasis on pre-school programs. Bush's reply has been "let's just concentrate on one thing at a time."

Predictably, some of the governors have used the summit to link the education problem with other topics, such as defense spending. Some governors, most notably Mario Cuomo of New York, have suggested scrapping a few missile programs and transferring the money to the education budget.

Good idea.

Proposals are nice. Plans are even better. But unless action is taken, all that's left are words and scraps of paper.

Read our lips George: we want a better education system.

Letters

Not enough

I would like to draw attention to the inadequate offer the University has made for the new contract with the Graduate Teaching Fellows Federation.

I realize the University is operating under a condition of limited financial resources, that there are many deserving areas which could benefit from additional funding, and the setting of priorities among these areas is a difficult task. However, it appears the importance of GTFs has not been recognized.

It is well known that the faculty here are paid quite a bit less than at many comparable institutions, and this is also true of GTFs. This University cannot attract the best faculty or graduate students with just a beautiful environment and the

potentiality of high quality within our individual programs.

It shows a lack of understanding of how to build for the future to offer the GTFs an increase in pay that is half the percentage of inflation. One loaf of bread costs the same whether one is earning \$3,000 or \$30,000, but it is, of course, a much higher proportion of the lower salary.

Our president, Myles Brand, wants to stress "the continuation of quality in research and undergraduate education." (ODE, Sept. 18) Do the people in positions of setting financial priorities understand the critical role the GTFs play in the undergraduate education at this university?

If they do, and we are all truly striving for "A Degree of Ex-

cellence," I believe they must reevaluate their positions concerning the University's support for the GTFs.

Victor Mansure
Music GTF

Back to school

You know that school's back in session when: the number of runners increases a hundred-fold; you can't find an empty booth at Taylor's on Friday or Saturday night; and yet one more reactionary tirade by Jon Wollander appears in ODE's letters section. Can William Moore and Lori Parkman be far behind?

But, interesting as it was, Wollander's "responsible list" (ODE, Sept. 25) left out a few important ideas. Nowhere did he mention big timber corpora-

tions that are given "our" forests to rape as they please; nor churches that pay no taxes yet receive police and fire protection; or groups like the Israelis or the (white) South Africans, who are not even U.S. citizens, yet have millions of American bucks piled up on their doorsteps so that they can more efficiently keep their "undesir-

ables" in line.

Let's face it, Wollander: the difference between a "liberal" and a "conservative" is solely defined by which special interest group they back. That is one of the reasons why so many of us reject either label.

Bill Smee
Staff

Letters Policy

The Emerald will attempt to print all letters containing comments on topics of interest to the University community. Comments must be factually accurate and refrain from personal attacks on the character of others.

Letters to the editor must be limited to no more than 250 words, legible, signed and the identification of the writer must be verified when the letter is submitted.

The Emerald reserves the right to edit any letter for length or style.