

“Love each other as I have loved you.”

John 15:12

February 2009
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“Smile at each other, smile at your wife, smile at your husband, smile at your children, smile at each other—it doesn’t matter who it is—and that will help you to grow up in greater love for each other.”

Mother Teresa

“There is only one happiness in life: to love and be loved.”

George Sand

“Happiness comes when your work and words are of benefit to yourself and others.”

Unknown

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EXECUTIVE NOTES

The Contract: A “Collective Agreement”

It seems that occasionally a debate ensues over an article in the contract. Someone somewhere, an administrator and sometimes a teacher, has an idea and feels that it justifies dismissing a particular article in the contract. On the discovering of this mistaken notion there tends to be a reaction against the correction. If it is TSU we are often portrayed as intransigent and against any change. But the contract is a living document and the changes in every round of bargaining are part of the collective attempt to agree to changes that serve a balance of interest’s best. In fact the Articles the Board and TSU have agreed to include unique models at Mary Ward, Continuing Education, and Monsignor Fraser to name a few. There are significant changes every round.

The contract is signed by two parties – TCDSB and TSU. It is signed after long periods of negotiation and discussion by representatives from both sides. The final product is not easily arrived at and the collective wisdom of the negotiators eventually leads to an agreement. The signed contract is the fruit of their labour and worthy of respect. It is owned and implemented by both TSU and the Board. We share the responsibility in this in clarifying and correcting both teacher and administrators.

There are reasons why the contract is the way it is. Sometimes the rationale might not be readily apparent but there are reasons why a clause is in the contract. When individuals decide to act outside the contract, they are in effect (knowingly or unknowingly) working against the efforts of both parties that are signatories to the document.

When in doubt about the collective agreement contact your TSU rep or call the TSU office. We are more than glad to answer any question. To act independently without understanding the rationale, implications, and background hurts us all; TSU and its members, the Board and its personnel, and our school communities.

If in doubt – Give us a call – 416-633-5502. Perhaps you have something to share for consideration in the next round. We are keeping an annotated contract for consideration by the next bargaining team.

Negotiating Pension Changes: Tell Me About It!

There have been ongoing pension negotiations for the past decade. The Teachers Pension Fund must have a valuation every three years, or less if the partners choose. The current conditional indexing talks began at the end of the last round. The last valuation negotiation called for an expert panel review of the assumptions that are the basis for the fund valuation. At the same time a survey was done with teachers across the province to inform the start of this negotiation. OTF is the source of communications and they require agreement of all affiliates on information to be shared during negotiations. There is understandable frustration when members do not realize the early communications and survey that started these negotiations occurred approximately two years ago. Negotiating presents challenges that may not be familiar to those who have not negotiated. A few such challenges are listed below.

Negotiating

- ◆ When you bargain you must have important research done in advance
- ◆ Complex negotiations take a long time and require more preparation
- ◆ You need to establish an internal bargaining position first to know your goals and best alternatives (OTF bargains for pensions and therefore must try to align all the affiliate partners, and if possible, develop support and understanding of the government partner before negotiating with the Ontario Teachers Pension Board who controls the fund under law.
- ◆ You do not bargain in public

EXECUTIVE NOTES

- ◆ You avoid any communication or action that undermines your position or distracts your efforts – often entering communication blackouts
- ◆ You must respect agreements with partners or the other bargaining side for the bargaining process and communication.

It is also understandable that members want more communication. OECTA and OTF representatives share those concerns and are continuing to review communication protocols as talks are already underway for the next valuation, and continue in completing the most recent plan changes. The challenge is also in reaching members who are so busy in their work lives and who are overwhelmed with communications from many sources. There is also the challenge of all the technical items involved from real rate return bonds and the effects on liabilities, investment returns and plan assumptions, and such items which make most people's eyes glaze over. We hope this helps:

Pension FAQ's can be found at http://www.otffeo.on.ca/en/teachers_pensions/faq.php

Your representatives are the provincial executive and most directly our OTF governors. Their information is available at <http://www.oecta.on.ca/aboutoecta/provexec.htm> and http://www.otffeo.on.ca/en/about_otf/staff.php

TSU President Rene' Jansen in de Wal is an OTF Governor and is available to visit staffs and answer questions. He can be reached at 416.633.5502

Conditional Indexing of Pensions: Should I Retire!?!?

Conditional indexing of pensions should not be the basis for choosing to retire. Other factors have a far greater impact. Be sure to get the facts, not fear, to make critical retirement decisions.

The Pension Reps

Frank Bruno, (St. Mary's Secondary)

In my last article, in January's Highlights entitled *Pssst! Listen up! This could cost you money!* I asked the following question: *"By the way, does anyone know who our pension representatives are and how they are selected/elected?"* It is the intent of this article to answer that question.

Let me try to streamline that information for you. There are two partners in our pension plan, the Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF) and the Government of Ontario. OTF, which represents the interests of the teachers, has four affiliate members: (AEFO) Association Des Enseignantes Et Des Enseignants Franco-Ontariens; (ETFO) Elementary Teachers' Federation Of Ontario; (OSSTF) Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation; and lastly, but not least, (OECTA) Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association. Each affiliate has 10 representatives at the OTF Board of Governors' table.

Our current OECTA representatives, at this "all-affiliate table" of OTF are: OECTA's Past President, Donna Marie Kennedy; the President, Elaine Mac Neil; the First Vice-President, James Ryan; the Second Vice-President, Kevin O Dwyer; OTF Executive Table Officer, Reno Melatti (York); Tom Doyle (Algonquin-Lakeshore); George Saranchuk (Niagara) ; Michael Wozniak (Dufferin-Peel) and Rene Jansen in de Wal (currently also TSU President).

All of these positions are elected at the OECTA Annual General Meeting. There is one further representative, who is not an elected person, and that is the General Secretary of OECTA, Marshall Jarvis.

As you can imagine, making decisions around the whole provincial table can be very complicated because there are so many stakeholders involved.

OECTA RESPONDS TO PENSION QUESTIONS



The following article has been printed at the request of the provincial president, Elaine Mac Neil, in response to the articles published in the January edition of the TSU Highlights.

A process very different from that portrayed in the January article resulted in the recent change to the Teachers' Pension Plan (The Plan) involving "Conditional Indexation".

The parties to The Plan are the Ontario Government and the Ontario Teachers' Federation. Each Partner appoints representatives to negotiate an agreement that is then ratified by their respective authorized individuals. For the Ontario Teachers' Federation the body with this authority is the Board of Governors that consists of 10 elected representatives from each of the teacher affiliates, including OECTA. OECTA's representatives are elected each year during our Annual General Meeting. These elected representatives reflect a cross-section of the teaching experience of the membership.

Although not a partner in legal sense, the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan Board (OTPPB) is involved in the determination of surplus or deficit and in the discussion around measures to address either circumstance. The Plan was valued on January 1, 2008 and showed a \$19 billion deficit which, if filed with the Financial Services Commission of Ontario (FSCO), would have resulted in an increase in pension premiums from 11% of gross salary to 16%. This increase would have been in place for the next 15 years. The results would have been devastating for most teachers. It was suggested that the partners should have changed the 85 factor or other aspects of The Plan. All possible changes were seriously considered but none of the alternatives would have generated the monies necessary to address the deficit. If there

had been no agreement on measures to address the deficit, teachers would have been paying a 16% pension premium effective January 1, 2009. In order to avoid this, the Partners agreed to implement Conditional Indexation based upon the following principles written into the Funding Management Policy of the Teacher Pension Act:

- ◆ The Partners will maintain 100% indexation for all members unless a valuation shows The Plan is in deficit.
- ◆ In the event of a deficit, a minimum of 50% indexation is guaranteed with the remaining value, between 50 – 100%, determined on the basis of the available funding of The Plan. Studies of our pension plan show that, had conditional indexation been in effect since the inception of The Plan, full indexation (100%) would have been achieved 90% of the time.
- ◆ Should full indexation not be paid, there is a "catch-up" provision which provides for the increase of a pension to its correct level (as if full indexation been paid) when sufficient surpluses exist in The Plan. No retroactive monies are paid but the base level of the pension is increased for the future.

Given the two choices, your elected representatives made the difficult, but necessary decision, on behalf of our membership. This is the process OECTA has utilized for decades. A special meeting of the OECTA Council of Presidents was held on September 25, 2008 to apprise unit representatives of the situation. The Council did support the decision we proposed.

In addition to the member updates distributed through OTF, OECTA provided information immediately to the membership in a variety of forms, e-Agenda, webcast, a special pension email site and unit presentations, much of this is still operational today. We encourage members to make use of the factual information provided through the OECTA pension expert.

Archbishop Tom Collins to Visit TSU Executive

René Jansen In de Wal, President

The TSU Executive is honoured that Archbishop Tom Collins will be visiting our office soon. The executive as part of larger strategic efforts invited his Grace to meet with us. The TSU executive recognizes that the most important parts of our Catholic culture are a necessary focus, and that we must build a culture that looks more like our shared gospel values and ideals .

We share a great deal in common with our partners. This is not to suggest that we do not have differences or that we will not have disagreements, but in order to build some trust and respect we must make a greater effort to recognize and commit to what we share in common. This has been part of a frank and sincere discussion we have pursued with administrators, superintendents, the director, trustees, and now the Archbishop.

The Anti Unionists - They'rrre Back!

Gerard Ardanaz, First Vice-President

The headline screams *'Public Sector Unions just don't seem to get it.'* It has started again and perhaps now is as good a time as any to start preparing ourselves for the expected attack on anyone who dares to say, "I demand a fair deal". Those of us who have been around can recall the Harris years and the abuse we took. For those who weren't around, it is time to prepare for a period where you will be looked down upon simply because you are a teacher and a member of a unionized workforce. The public will pick up on the mood expressed in the media each time one of us dares to either voice a concern or a need for our system. Our pay will come under criticism and our working conditions (i.e. vacations) will be envied. Yet our countless lost weekends, money contributed for school supplies, extra time and money spent taking upgrading courses, and volunteer efforts will never be accounted for. A downturn in the economy tends to create a whole class of union critics. When times are good, they argue that taxes are too high to afford more for the public services that our society must pay for. When they're bad, it's time to cut back. It is time to look at our collective and remind ourselves of the need for unity.

I wonder, if the public sector operated the way the private sector has been operating, would we have been bailed out?

The OSSTF-TDSB standoff is a grim reminder of this scenario. The news on the radio blared that all that the teachers were being asked for was an extra 8 minutes. An "EXTRA EIGHT MINUTES" – How ludicrous! Why wouldn't the teachers sign? If it was only 8 minutes, I doubt the union could get support for its position. This so called "8 minutes" mantra is very reminiscent of the Harris commercials saying that they were requesting only a few more minutes a day from the teachers of Ontario. The reality was that what the government wanted was the teachers of Ontario to teach 7 (seven) not 6 periods a year. (Imagine teaching 4 sections in one semester). OSSTF is in effect being asked to add to their workload by increasing the number of on calls and at the principal's discretion. OSSTF is refusing to accept this even though they could lose the 12% over 4 years that we have received. The TDSB knows this all too well and most likely is sitting back hoping for a crack in the OSSTF solidarity. As usually happens, the cry against the unions is getting louder while management escapes any real scrutiny.

After years of being told that if we worked in "THE REAL WORLD" we'd be more efficient, more grateful, better teachers, and our educational system would



definitely be better, perhaps now it is time to turn the tables. We should start asking:

- ◆ Who mismanaged the economy? The unions or management?
- ◆ Who was being overpaid while their industries were floundering if not sinking? The Private or Public sector?
- ◆ Who is being bailed out to the tune of billions (trillions?) of dollars? The Private sector or the Public Sector?
- ◆ Who will cause taxes to rise, unemployment to rise, suffering to increase and perhaps cause a lowering of our standard of living? The Private sector or the Public Sector?
- ◆ Who benefited the most during the good years? The Private Sector or Public Sector?
- ◆ Who will get the most tax benefits from the deficits and debt being run up by governments? If welfare, medicare or education cost this much, they would have been stopped years ago.

It is time to realize that the constant harping (pardon the pun) against unions is just that – harping or complaining about someone else so that we won't see the true reality. The people in charge have failed this society and now they're hoping no one notices. As unionists, we must realize that those who complain about us, don't care about us. We will be tested and only in being unified can we succeed. It is time to ask ourselves – Who are our true friends? Who is acting in the best interests of our society?

“Public Sector Unions just don't seem to get it.”???

I wonder, if the public sector operated the way the private sector has been operating, would we have been bailed out?

Catholic Schools Under Attack!

David Chiarelli/PAC Liaison/3rd VP

OECTA Provincial and TSU PAC are attending the upcoming NDP Leadership and Policy Convention in Hamilton on the weekend of March 6 through 8. We need to defeat an NDP motion that could become a big Catholic schools issue during the next provincial election in 2011. If the motion is passed, the NDP will run on a party platform to cut off funding for our Catholic schools, and create one province wide public school system!

The NDP Socialist Caucus is seeking support for the motion. NDP leadership contender MPP Michael Prue [Beaches-East York] wants to bring it to the convention floor for "discussion purposes". Prue has spoken out for a one school system before. Malcolm Buchanan from the "One School System Network", an outspoken critic of our Catholic schools, will also attend. He has wanted the party to adopt this policy for many years. He jumped on the Conservatives faith based schools election issue to make Catholic school funding hot front page news in 2007. This growing threat must not be taken lightly. We need to thwart this initiative!

Remember when John Tory ran for the Conservatives on a faith-based school funding platform in the last provincial election? TSU PAC members canvassing for various pro-education Liberal and NDP candidates were relieved when many voters told us that they wouldn't support the Conservatives because they opposed funding faith-based schools. Then to our horror, they often added that they would like to see funding eliminated for our Catholic schools too!

Might the Tories have combined all the schools into one big province-wide system, including ours, as the next step in their funding plan? Fortunately they were defeated. Both the NDP and Liberals promised continued support for our Catholic school system. In the November Highlights, we reported that TSU PAC had confirmed the Liberal Party's support again when we met Premier McGuinty at their fall policy convention. NDP party leader, Howard Hampton, has supported our schools but is stepping down. Aside from Prue, there are three other NDP party leadership contenders who claim they support us, but can we just stand idly by and hope for the best? This hasn't been TSU PAC's approach to threats before, and it certainly must not be so now!

We are organizing Catholic teachers to help defeat the motion now, so our schools won't become a big election issue in 2011. Subsidies are available to help pay convention costs for our card carrying OECTA NDP party members who are going, or who want to attend. Then there's an OECTA breakfast caucus to organize our delegates from across the province, to speak and vote against the motion, at the convention. Are you a card carrying OECTA NDP member? Do you know any other TSU teachers who are? Please contact me, as your TSU PAC Executive Liaison, by emailing me at chiarellid@tsuoecta.org or by phoning our office, as soon as you can. Learn more about the subsidy and how you can help save our Catholic schools. As Catholic teachers we can make a difference!

New Year's Resolutions:

Maureen Riffin (Loretto Abbey CSS), Chair, TSU Legislation Committee and Member, OECTA Legislation Committee.

**...get in shape; get ahead in marking;
get involved in the union!...**

Okay . . . it's February, not January, but it's not too late to consider a few resolutions for 2009 - the OECTA Provincial AGM resolutions to be precise.

The Toronto Secondary Unit (TSU) is a local bargaining unit of OECTA, an affiliate of the Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF). That's the group that oversees your pension, among other things, and in the doldrums of February, who doesn't dream of retiring to the sunny climes of "anywhere but here"? But I, and about 700 other Ontario Catholic teachers, would sooner stay in Toronto in March and keep a few resolutions.

Every March Break, representative delegates from across the province meet in Toronto to complete a three-fold mission: set the fee per member for the professional association/union (to provide the local and provincial services that protect our working conditions; elect the officers (provincial executive) to run the affairs of the association and lobby for Catholic teachers, students, and education; and just as importantly, debate and vote on amendments to the OECTA handbook, our constitution.

TSU's bylaws call for FOUR general membership meetings. These are the October budget meeting, a late November meeting where proposed resolutions are debated for consideration by teachers across the province, in March; a meeting in February OPEN TO ALL MEMBERS where those who were selected as delegates prepare for the March meeting, and our own UNIT Annual General Meeting (UAGM) in late May, when we elect our local executive, including the three release officers, those helpful folks you call up at 416-633-5502! As well, there are committees of staff reps, joint committees with the board on staffing, health and safety, safe schools, professional development and many other areas.

On FEBRUARY 25th after school at the TSU office, the PRE-AGM Delegation Preparation meeting will take place. That's Ash Wednesday! Why not take on being active in Catholic unionism for Lent? Resolve to be there! Give your opinions on the resolutions from across the province. A supplement containing all resolutions, declared candidates, and the cost of various initiatives will be in your staff mailbox soon. Help make OECTA your union by being involved. Even if you are not going to be a delegate this time (applications were due in early January) you can drop in as an observer during the meeting itself. After all, won't you miss Toronto in March????

THE AISLE SEAT REVIEW: The Class

By Alan Orino (St. Mary's Secondary)

If only I could include this movie in 2008's Top Five. Screened at Cannes 2008, where it was awarded the Palme D'Or for Best Picture, and at the New York Film Festival in late September last year, this film had limited engagements in New York and Los Angeles for the purpose of Oscar consideration. There was even a free screening here last November as part of the European United Film Festival. For many, this is considered a 2008 release, which is unfortunate given that this film was commercially released in mid-January. Directed by Laurent Cantet, *The Class* is the French entry for this year's Academy Awards. Adapted for the screen by François Bégaudeau (who plays himself as François Marin) from his own novel, *Entre les murs*, *The Class* chronicles one year of a teacher's experiences in an inner-city, multicultural school.

Within François' French class of 13 to 14-year-old students, we are introduced to: Boubacar, the class clown, ready at a moment's notice to sneak in any verbal innuendo; Souleymane, helpful at home, but a trouble to teachers; Khoumba, talkative, sometimes inattentive; Esmérelida, always willing to challenge her teacher's methods; Wei, a highly academic student from China, trying to cope with the French language. For these students, in particular, while they try to struggle with a curriculum, they also question themselves as to what it means to be immigrants in France.

Throughout the film, François' students experience moments of inspiration accompanied by great tension and conflict. Some "teachable" moments include an honest discussion with his students on writing a "self-portrait" (based on their readings of *The Diary of Anne Frank*), and a display of exemplary work from one of his toughest students. François's toughest times though, stem from his (unnecessary) confrontations with his students, which often leave him frustrated. The most striking incident occurred when he referred to Esmérelida and Louise, who behaved inappropriately during a staff meeting, using a derogatory word. Talk of the incident spread not only among

other students, but also to another teacher. Determined to clear his name of the matter, he took matters into his own hands by approaching those two students outside in the schoolyard during break – all by himself, with no support-pitting himself against a whole gang of students in full support of their friends.

What makes *The Class* most fascinating is its realistic portrayal of an inner-city school. Filmed in a documentary-like fashion, both Laurent Cantet and François Bégaudeau ensure that the setting, characters, and situations are as authentic as possible. Using non-professional actors as students, their on-screen characters are established through rigorous acting workshops after school. The student actors, many of them good-natured and well-behaved, transform with great ease into tough-as-nails, often rambunctious teenagers, constantly at odds with their teacher.

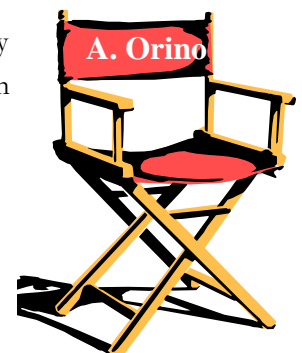
While it is fine to find solace and inspiration behind American films such as *Dead Poets Society*, *Music of the Heart*, *Stand and Deliver*, *Dangerous Minds*, and *Freedom Writers*, *The Class* ranks high above these films where we see both the best and

the not-so-best sides of teachers and their students. The film celebrates teachable moments and balances them with the intense frustrating challenges of teaching. From the perspective of an inner-city teacher, so much can be discussed and analyzed in terms of pedagogy, discipline, and classroom management. It is because of this that watching *The Class* can be quite a rewarding experience for its rich detail, its ability to capture day-to-day situations both in the classroom and in the staffroom.

This film could have easily made my Top 10 list from last year had I been able to see it then. I only hope that it will leave a lasting impact this year to make it onto my next list.



Source: www.loftcinema.com



Ontario English Catholic Teachers Association

TORONTO SECONDARY UNIT

Primary Business Address
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Your Address Line 3
Your Address Line 4

Highlights is published monthly by the Toronto Secondary Unit of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association and is the result of the collaborative efforts of the members of the communications committee. Anyone interested in volunteering for the Highlights should contact the TSU Office.

Gerard Ardanaz, Tamar Clutterbuck, Myra Kostiw, Alan Orino, Teresa Placha, Mark Stelmacovich, Josephine Van Dusen.

Editorial Policy: In accordance with the TSU by-laws, Highlights publishes opinions and other items of interest to our members as Catholic teachers from a variety of viewpoints. The Editorial Board must approve articles prior to publication. The editor may edit articles for reasons of length. The opinions expressed are those of the authors, not of OECTA-TSU as a whole. Anonymous material will not be published, although names may be withheld on request. Submissions are welcome. Please send to the TSU office, Attention: Communications Committee or email to:

highlights@tsuoecta.org

IMPORTANT DATES

Collective Agreement Deadlines

LSSAC to meet by February 18 to resolve class loading Discrepancies (5.02 (e))	February 18
Class size review at each school by principal and teachers (5.03)	1st Week of March
Tentative school staffing models shall be established in consultation with LSSAC's (5.06 (a))	Before April 15
Postponement of Deferred Salary Plan. (21.07 (c))	Before April 15
Teachers who are determined to be surplus to a school's staffing model shall be given written notice.(5.06(d))	Before April 15
List of Open Positions 7.08(b)(ii)	By April 22

Annual TSU Teachers' Volleyball Tournament

Friday, March 6

4 – 8 p.m.

@ Pope John Paul II C.S.S. (Scarborough)

2008—2009

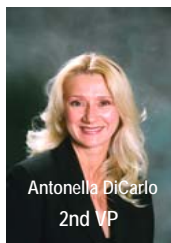
TSU EXECUTIVE



René Jansen
President



Gerard Ardanaz 1st
VP



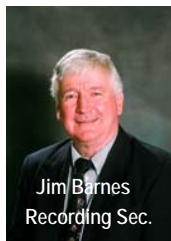
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3rd VP



Claire Bonk
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Jim Barnes
Recording Sec.



Mark Stelmacovich
Councillor



Gillian Vivona
Councillor



Louie Trihchi
Councillor

Attention all TSU Members! The annual Teachers' Volleyball Tournament is back by popular demand. This year's tournament will be hosted by Pope John Paul II with a social event to follow. The tournament will run on Friday, March 6 from 4 pm to 8 pm. Each participating school is allowed to enter as many teams as it would like in either the competitive or non-competitive divisions. This year both divisions will play at the same location! As in the past, each team should have a designated "Captain" and a minimum of 6 players (1 substitute). In order to simplify things, please register by email. All that we require is the name of the captain for each team, the name of your school, the number of players on each team and the division that you will be playing in. In keeping with tradition, we will also ask participants to make a small donation to a charity (TBA) following the awards ceremony. All inquiries and registration info should be emailed to the Chair of the Beginning Teachers' Committee, Matt Lannan at the address below. It is our sincere hope that as many schools and teachers as possible will participate and stick around to socialize with their colleagues. All the best for the new semester!

Registration Info--What we need from you:

Name of your school

The division you are playing in (Competitive or non-competitive)

Number of players/team (must have a minimum of 6 + a designated Captain.)
You DO NOT need to provide the names of individual team members -- ONLY the Captain's name

Please send the above information to Matt Lannan @ mlannan@hotmail.com by Wednesday, February 25 at the latest. You will receive confirmation ASAP and details regarding rules, refs and playing times will follow in the coming weeks!

Submission of articles for Highlights are due March 27, 2009