

Society for Academic Freedom & Scholarship

Number 10

NEWSLETTER

April 1995

Purposes of SAFS

1. Maintaining freedom in teaching, research and scholarship.
2. Maintaining standards of excellence in hiring and promotion of university faculty.

Debating Employment Equity: Impressions from Grant Brown's Speaking Tour

Grant Brown, University of Lethbridge

On February 1st through 3rd, I visited three campuses in Ontario to debate the merits of employment equity. The first event was organized by a group of Law students at Queen's University, the second was organized by SAFS at the University of Toronto, and the third was organized by the Philosophy Department at the University of Waterloo. The Fraser Institute covered most of my transportation costs and incidentals.

For a more detailed exposition of my critique of employment equity, interested SAFS members can obtain a copy of my submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Rights upon request. (See addresses below.) Here I will merely give my impressions of how my arguments were received.

It is noteworthy that at Queen's and Waterloo, the organizers found it very difficult to find someone willing to defend current employment equity legislation. Indeed, at Waterloo nobody came forward to debate me in spite of public appeals to the academic community. For the most part, those who did come forward at Queen's and the University of Toronto only wished to support employment equity "in principle"; none wanted to defend Ontario's Bill 79 in particular. I might add that the audiences at these events were considerably less

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***Second Annual
SAFS Conference and
Annual General Meeting***

May 20, 1995

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hostile that it has been my experience to expect. At Waterloo, the audience in fact appeared to be predominantly receptive to my position.

There are two ways to interpret this. One is to suppose that the pendulum is beginning to swing back to a more moderate position, and away from the hiring-by-numbers approach of employment equity. Another is to suppose that the forces of political correctness are laying low for strategic reasons: having won the legislative battle on dubious grounds, joining the intellectual debate at this point can only serve to demonstrate the poverty of their position and so undermine their political successes. I think there is some truth to both of these hypotheses.

One of my main challenges to employment equity was in the form of statistical data which contradicts the premise that members of the designated groups are disadvantaged or systemically discriminated against in Canada. I presented tables showing that women in particular have been hired and promoted into faculty positions at Canadian universities in proportions that are actually greater than their historical availability in the qualified applicant pool — even before employment

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equity was legislated, but increasingly so in more recent years. Although my data are much more reliable than those that are typically used to support the charge of systemic discrimination, the reaction from the other side was largely dismissive. At Queen's it was suggested that "one can prove anything with statistics," and that therefore one should trust personal experience and anecdotal evidence more than statistics. However, when I began to recount anecdotes involving blatant discrimination against white, able-bodied males, these were dismissed as being merely isolated cases. At the University of Toronto, my data was met with nothing more than sheer speculation: maybe the women in the qualified pools were vastly better than the men, which is why they were more likely to be hired; or maybe the same woman is hired to a series of one-year term positions where a man would be hired only once, to a tenure-track position.

But the main response to my statistical data was simply to ignore it and shift the debate to other, less easily falsifiable arguments. When the claim of systemic discrimination became too difficult to maintain, it was argued that young people need diverse role models, or that the academy needs more "non-standard" researchers to broaden our perspectives. These arguments are, of course, no better. It is worth noting, for example, that there is absolutely no correlation between disciplines into which women have flooded as students in the past 25 years, and disciplines with a relatively high proportion of female faculty. Most of the professional schools, for example, have at least proportionate representation of female students, even though the proportion of female faculty remains relatively low.

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SAFS' NEW SECRETARY

Wendy Armstrong, our new secretary, starts on April 5. Wendy is experienced in secretarial and administrative work and has a good background in computer programs, data bases, and the internet. We are pleased to have her on staff.

Wendy's hours will be Wednesdays 2-5 pm and Thursdays and Fridays 9 am - 5 pm.
Phone: (416)978-7062; Fax: (416)978-4811;
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Laurie MacKay, Secretary-Treasurer
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SECOND ANNUAL SAFS CONFERENCE AND ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

May 20, 1995

“University in Jeopardy: Nonfaculty Perspectives”

In our first annual conference in May, 1994, the panels focussed on the perspectives of faculty (professors and departmental chairs). This year, as suggested by the title, the members-only part of the meeting will focus on student and alumni concerns.

Except for the lunch and the post-lunch talks by **John Fekete**, sessions will be open only to SAFS members.

(Be sure you have paid your membership dues!)

Lunch-session-only registration is \$20, and full registration is \$25, if received before May 1, 1995. Registration fees after May 1 will be \$30 and \$35, respectively. A registration form is included with this newsletter, and a membership form is also included for those who have not yet renewed for 1995. Conference Sessions will be held at the University of Toronto, Room 2118, Sidney Smith Hall, 100 St. George St. The lunch, which is open to the public, will be held in Seeley Hall, Trinity College, 6 Hoskin Avenue.

PROGRAM

9.00 - 10.00 am

Registration and Coffee

10.15 - 11.45 am

Students and the University

Chaired by John Furedy

Panelists: Peter Hanus (University of Toronto); Joe Katzman (York University); and Krista Soots (OISE), will discuss *“General principles for dealing with PC”* based on their experiences.

12 noon - 1.45 pm

Lunch

Speaker: John Fekete, Professor of History, Trent University and author of *“Moral Panic: Biopolitics Rising”*. Professor Fekete will speak on *“Moral Panic: Biopolitics and Academic Freedom”*.

2.15 - 3.00 pm

Alan Gold, Criminal lawyer, Toronto, will speak on *“Alumni-initiated defences of academic freedom”*.

3.00 - 3.20 pm

John Furedy will speak on *“Some ideas about making SAFS more inclusive in the sound sense of that term”*.

3.30 - 5.00 pm

Workshops

5.15 - 6.15 pm

Annual General Meeting

Reports by SAFS Chapter Co-ordinators, Board reports, Election of Officers.

MERIT AND EQUITY RECONCILED?

The following quotes are taken from the March, 1995 *University Affairs*. Other than our emphasising the term "merit" in this report, no further editorial comment appears necessary.

"York University has won a national *merit* (our emphasis) award from Human Resources Development Canada for its work on employment equity", which included setting up "eight joint subcommittees...(and) an ongoing review of employment systems."

"Employment equity co-ordinator Gill Teiman...adds that York implemented aspects of employment equity well before such actions were required by law."

"The other two winners of the 1994 award were Canada Mortgage and Housing and Ortho-McNeil Inc., a manufacturer and distributor of pharmaceutical products."

The Safs Newsletter

The editor welcomes short articles, case studies, news items, comments, readings, local chapter news, etc. Longer items are preferred on disk 3.5" (MS-DOS) in Word Perfect, or by E-mail. Address: **Chris Furedy**, c/o J. Furedy, Psychology, 4024 Sidney Smith Hall, University of Toronto, Toronto, ON, M5S 1A1. Fax: (416) 962-4253. E-mail: safs@psych.utoronto.ca

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