MINUTES OF THE EIGHTH MEETING
OF THE
CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY PENSIONERS' ASSOCIATION
HELD ON
WEDNESDAY, MAY 8TH, 1991
AT 1100 HOURS
IN ROOMS 762-1, 2 & 3 OF THE HALL BUILDING

8.1 Call to Order

8.1.1 Bordan called the meeting to order at 1105. He welcomed everyone to the eighth meeting of the Association and apologized for the change of room. The change had been made to accommodate a larger group in the lounge of the Faculty Club.

8.2 Approval of Agenda

8.2.1 Bordan added one item to the Agenda, under Item 6, President's Report, a resolution relating to the University Health Insurance Plan. With this addition, it was moved and seconded (Hall/Osborne) that the Agenda be approved. Carried.

8.3 Approval of the Minutes

8.3.1 Bordan pointed out a typo in the Minutes of the Meeting of Wednesday, October 24th. 1900 to be changed to 1990. There being no other errors or omissions, and with this correction, it was moved and seconded (Ufford/Hall) that the Minutes be accepted. Carried.

8.4 Business Arising from the Minutes

8.4.1. Report on Annual Luncheon

Gardham reported that forty-two people had attended the luncheon, which had been held on Thursday, December 13th, 1990, and that everyone seemed to have enjoyed themselves. Hall congratulated the Committee involved with the organization of this pleasant annual get-together.

8.4.2 Report on Membership Survey

Whitelaw reported that there were 72 responses to the two hundred or so survey questionnaires that had been sent out. According to people who do this sort of thing all the time, that is not a bad percentage. They are presently in the process of coding these responses, which is a lengthy procedure with volunteers. Basically there are

two stages: The first involves sorting by hand, the second is putting the information into the computer. Data should be available for the next meeting. Whitelaw asked those present if they had any objection to his sending some of the relevant comments, anonymously, to the University. The general consensus was that it would be a good idea to send both bouquets and brick-bats.

8.4.3 Report on Cooperation with University Advancement

Bordan and Whitelaw met with Christopher Hyde after the last meeting. As a result of this meeting some of our members participated in a Senior Citizens Scholarship phonathon, and the Alumni phonathon in March. Those who participated seemed to enjoy themselves, but no report has yet been received from the University on the results.

At this point Bordan asked permission of those present to rearrange the Agenda, as Dr. John O'Brien was present.

8.7 Presentation by Dr. John W. O'Brien, Professor of Economics and Rector Emeritus of Concordia University

8.7.1 Whitelaw introduced O'Brien.

O'Brien opened by saying that he was glad to be here, especially to see so many people that he has known for so long. In response to Whitelaw's introductory remarks he said it was nice to be remembered as human and reasonable, even if all of the examples given were at least twenty-five years old.

O'Brien's topic was Alliance Quebec. The organization seems to have a rather different reputation in the English community and in the French community. The former see it as wimpish, overcautious,and ineffectual, the latter as a radical organization always making unreasonable and unfounded demands. The French and English still see things in very different ways. The French community still has trouble accepting the existence of minorities in its own society. They are so accustomed to seeing themselves as a minority in Canada that they don't react instinctively to seeing other groups as a minority in their own Province, and anything critical of policies in Quebec tend to get a very negative reaction.

The English Community seems to have trouble accepting the idea that there are many ways of pursuing a goal, and as a minority in the Province we need as many groups as possible.

Alliance Quebec is a lobby group not a political party, a distinction which, to many, does not seem very clear. It attempts to make representations to whatever government may be relevant, very often the government of Quebec, on things it would like to get changed. It is not trying to get any group elected to office, nor does it represent or support any particular party. The kind of work it tries to do follows out of that particular role.

One of the ongoing activities that seems to take up a very large chunk of energy is the area of health and social services. Bill 142 is the law that provides and defines the kind of services in units like Ville Marie and Hospitals, that are to be provided in English to English clientele, and was the result of successful lobbying by Alliance Quebec. However, once a law has been passed it then has to be implemented. This is particularly significant off the island of Montreal. Making sure these services are provided is an area of endless concern. As an example O'Brien described a problem which arose when the law was changed. The amendment process has a tendency to slip through both expected and unexpected changes. One provision was a slight change of wording. The previous law said the various institutions are to provide "les services" the new one says "des services". The difference between services and "some services" is quite significant. This was protested against and changed. This is the kind of continuous, detailed watching that Alliance Quebec goes through, that no one outside the group concerned with health and social services knows about.

Other activities - recently the government has put out a document on immigration policy, which called for comment, and Alliance Quebec has submitted a statement. Since the purpose of immigration has a good deal to do with maintaining the demographic base, English is also under some demographic pressure and there should be appropriate immigration to reinforce the English group as well. Don't hold your breath, but it is a point that has been made. One of Alliance Quebec's roles is to challenge these matters as they arise.

Another point - the hiring in the Civil Service. In Quebec Anglophones represent 8% of the population, and yet less than 1% of Civil Servants are English speaking. This has always been explained by saying that Quebec City is not a place to which a large number of English people are inclined to move. But a lot of government offices are in Montreal. There are fewer than 100 Anglos in these offices. The government appointed a committee to determine how to these things could be corrected, but that hasn't changed the situation.

Alliance Quebec has made a claim for some form of affirmative action. This is important particularly in the matter of jobs - and the government is one of the biggest employers in the Province.

Finally, the area of education. Since Claude Ryan left Education there has been a notable tightening up in a number of things. English people who came temporarily to Quebec, and were intending to leave could get a permit to send their children to English school. But now they have just instituted a rule that anyone with landed immigrant status is obviously going to stay, so they will not get one of these special permits. And children who are entitled to a permit will now no longer be allowed to enrol in school until they have the permit actually in hand. It takes the government many months to crank out these permits, so the children have to attend school in French first, and switch to English later. An upset for everyone.

These are things Alliance Quebec does on a continuing basis, without mentioning anything on the Constitution.

Alliance Quebec's role is as a lobby group to represent the interests of the English language community in a wide number of ways that often don't come to your attention with the frequency that the constitutional issues do.

The difficulties it faces in doing this kind of work?

1. Membership - Surprisingly few people belong to Alliance Quebec. It has never conducted an aggressive membership campaign. Membership is important to any kind of lobbying group because it is a natural to ask "who do you represent". Thus

their claim to be a spokes group is weakened. This is a fault of Alliance Quebec and of the community, and it must change if credibility is to continue. Alliance is planning a membership campaign in the fall, and we can only hope it succeeds in increasing the number of members.

Another problem is money and finances. Alliance Quebec, like similar French groups in other Provinces of Canada, has as its source of financial support, grants from the Secretary of State of Canada, set up to subsidize groups representing minorities. At one time they were reasonably funded, but those days are over. Budgets are being cut. The staff and the size of the operation is significantly smaller now than it was in the past. So it is starting to launch drives for financial contributions. But there is a problem. The problem is that since it is not a charitable organization it cannot give receipts deductible for income tax purposes. So we can see the problem it is facing. It will have to restrict the scale of its operation substantially.

Another weakness is that it receives limited support from institutions - hospitals, school boards, etc. - they are extremely cautious about being allied with Alliance Quebec because their main source of finances comes from the Government of Quebec, and also they might not think of themselves as English Language institutions any more. Many think of themselves as neither English or French, simply as Quebec intitutions.

O'Brien concluded by saying that at this point he thinks Alliance Quebec is in reasonably good shape although Bill 178 and the fire were very damaging to the organization and to its morale.

Dick McDonald thanked Dr. O'Brien who, he said, seemed to have been born to live in the eye of a storm. He was constantly moving into a world of change; he could see changes taking place and where we were in terms of those changes.

8.5 Establishment of fees for 1991-92

8.5.1 Bordan commented that the $ 5.00 fee seems to be working well and accomplishing what it set out to do.

It was moved and seconded (Hall/Osborne) that the fees once again be established at $ 5.00 for the fiscal year running from June 1, 1991 to May 31, 1992. Carried.

8.6 President's Report

At our last meeting Bordan had commented that he had sent a note of congratulations to Bob and Isobel Rae on the occasion of their wedding anniversary. It was now his sad responsibility to report that Bob Rae passed away just before Christmas, and he has sent a letter of condolence to his widow.

Also, Frances Friedman passed away since the last meeting.

8.6.1 Pension and Benefits Committees

Bordan stated that one of the motivating factors in establishing our organization was to lobby the University for representation on the Benefits Committee. Finally the government came to our assistance and passed a law that all institutions with private pension plans were to establish committees to oversee the plans, and that non-active members must be represented on these governing committees. Non-active members are defined as those people no longer making contributions to the plan. There was an election for this member, and with the help of John Hall there was a nomination paper put forward and Bordan was elected. There are now two committees, Pension and Benefits, with identical membership, and he serves on both. The term is one year, so we will be called upon to vote sometime before January 1992.

We all received a memo from Dawn Johnson, dated December 7, 1990, titled "Changes to Your Medical Plan - Striking a Balance." In a section of that memo under Limitations, it states "benefits payable for hospital and medical expenses incurred out of Canada by retired employees will be limited to $ 30,000 per calendar year." This provides a limitation on coverage, but only for a limited group - based not on age, but occupational status. Bordan has drafted a possible Resolution (Whitelaw passed copies to the group). Bordan felt they had chosen the wrong restriction, the retired status, rather than age, say 65. He pointed out that there hadn't been anyone from our group in on the decision making process - and those who had made the decision were looking after their own self-interest without hearing the retirees' point of view.

It was moved and seconded (Hall/McDougall) that as Sheldon had suggested, the second paragraph of the Resolution be changed to read "that CUPA ask the University to make more appropriate non-discriminatory revisions to the Health Plan, in consequence." Carried unanimously.

Bordan read letters he had written to Cohen to carry the Resolution and also to the President of CUFA because of the article in the latest Collective Agreement dealing with retirement benefits. He asked for the group's permission to send the letters and it was granted.

8.8 Report of the Programme Committee

8.8.1.1 McDougall reported that one of the first things on their agenda had been to find a speaker for today, and she felt they had chosen wisely.

According to the responses given on the questionnaire, several members had indicated that they would like more frequent get togethers. The Committee considered a sugaring off party for next spring - a show of hands indicated an interest. Then for late summer or early fall a golf tournament and dinner.

Potvin reported that they had hoped to latch on to the regular Concordia golf tournament, but there isn't one any more to latch on to. We can have a small (no more than 60 people) tournament at the Lafleur Golf Course on September 21. Greens fees $ 15.00, and a Roast Beef Buffet for $ 12.00. A show of hands indicated interest - some for golf only, some for dinner only, and some for both. A notice with specific information, will be sent out later.

8.9 Report of the Secretary-Treasurer

8.9.1 Gardham reported Receipts of $ 1,408, Disbursements of $ 1,332 for a difference of $ 76. Balance March 30, 1990 $ 825, balance March 30, 1991 $ 901.

It was moved and seconded (Hall/Jonassohn) that the Secretary-Treasurer's Report be accepted. Carried.

8.10 Amendments to the Constitution

8.10.1 Bordan read the proposed changes and explained their intent. Perhaps a definition of "non-active member" should be foot-noted:

> "'Non-active' as defined in the Pension Plan."

It was moved and seconded (Osborne/Hall) that the proposed changes to the Constitution be accepted. Carried unanimously.

8.11 Report of the Nominating Committee

8.11.1 Osborne reported that the Committee had prepared the following slate:

> President - Jim Whitelaw
> Vice-President - J.-P. Petolas
> Member-at-large - Mary Callaghan

and that all had agreed to serve if elected.

8.12 Elections

8.12.1 There being no nominations from the floor, it was moved and seconded (McDonald/Cozens) that the slate as prepared by the Nominating Committee, be accepted. Carried.

8.13 Other Business

8.13.1 Whitelaw reported that the Coalition des Ainés du Québec is a lobby group representing various seniors groups. Asked what the responsibilities would be he responded with "a $ 100 contribution and our representative would attend monthly meetings." They are bilingual meetings because both English groups and French groups belong. They keep an eye on new health legislation among other things.

Sheldon commented that he had sat on it for quite some time and found it a useful body for information about what is going on.

Whitelaw asked for suggestions as to how we should proceed.

Bordan commented that we could afford the financial outlay at the moment.

It was moved and seconded (Sheldon/Clarke) that we should join the Coalition. Carried.

8.13.2 Whitelaw commented that it was Bordan who provided the founding impetus to get this group started - it was entirely due to his initiative. It is very clear that he is the right person to be on the Pensions and Benefits Committees. He moved a vote of thanks to Bordan for his work for the association over the years.

Bordan thanked Whitelaw and commented that he always tried to quit at a time that when someone said they would be sorry to seem him go there was a 50:50 chance that they meant it.

8.14 Next Meeting

8.14.1 The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, October 23, 1991.

8.15 Adjournment

There being no further business, it was moved and seconded (Hall/McDougall) that the meeting adjourn at 1330 hrs. Carried.

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