APPROVAL

Name: Caelie Frampton
Degree: Master of Arts
Title of Thesis: TUITION REBATES AND THE TEACHING SUPPORT STAFF UNION: AN EXAMINATION OF THE TEXTUAL COORDINATION OF UNIVERSITY BARGAINING

Examining Committee:

Chair: Dr. Marilyn MacDonald
Assistant Professor, Department of Women's Studies
Simon Fraser University
Chair of the Graduate Program

Dr. Cindy Patton
Professor, Department of Women's Studies
Simon Fraser University
Senior Supervisor

Dr. Mark Leier
Professor, Department of History
Simon Fraser University
Supervisor

Dr. Daniyal Zuberi
Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology
University of British Columbia
External Examiner

Date Defended/Approved: Thursday, July 10th, 2007
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ABSTRACT

For the past decade unionized teaching assistants in Canada have secured tuition rebates through collective bargaining. Graduate student bargaining is rooted in public sector regulation, social organization, and state formation. I examine how ruling relations coordinate teaching assistants’ inability to secure a tuition waiver in the negotiation of the Teaching Support Staff Union’s latest contract which is dated from 2004-2010. In this thesis, I examine two texts that were influential in bargaining. First, I look at a Labour Relations Board decision over a TA strike at the University of British Columbia. Second, I will examine a leaked document from the Public Sector Employer’s Council dictating the bargain process to the University. Dorothy Smith’s “Institutional Ethnography” and “Mapping the Social Relations of Struggle” as methods of inquiry allow me to see how texts are coordinated in University bargaining and what teaching assistants can do to resist them.

Keywords: Institutional Ethnography, Teaching Support Staff Union, Tuition, Teaching Assistant Unions

Subject Terms: Sociology
To Sam, and all those committed to rebuilding labour from below.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The Office of Analytical Studies at Simon Fraser University (SFU) released a 2003 "Graduate Student Funding Study." In it, the financial experiences of graduate students were categorized and analyzed statistically. When graduate students respond in the study to graduate funding issues, one thing becomes clear: the burden of paying tuition drastically affects the take-home income of graduate students. Students told the University administration in the survey process: "I believe that graduate students should...be exempt from...tuition increases"; "If tuition rises, we should have raise [sic] in TAships accordingly”; “tuition waiver for TSSU members.” Behind the statistics, graduate students voiced the opinion that they could greatly benefit from tuition rebates.

The student voices in the 2003 University survey correspond with the results of a 2003 Teaching Support Staff Union (TSSU) survey. Union members stated that they were interested not only in a wage increase and better benefits but in a tuition rebate for their upcoming collective agreement negotiation process with SFU. That

1 Aman Bhangu, "Graduate Student Funding Study: Final Summary of Findings", Office of Analytical Studies, (2003): Appendix A.
2 Ibid., Appendix A.
bargaining process began in 2004 and carried through until the spring of 2006 when the TSSU covered the campus with posters that shouted, "Administration's salary is skyrocketing! So is your tuition. Demand a tuition waiver!" The poster incorporated a graph of the University administrations' wage increases, including a most notable 91% salary increase for the Vice President Finance between 2002-2005.\textsuperscript{4} The graph showed TAs the staggering contrast between their wage increases and the increases of administration wages in upper echelons of the ivory tower.

A central topic of conversation about access to post-secondary education in Canada has been the eradication of tuition fees since the 1970s. In 1976, the Canadian government symbolically signed onto the United Nations' Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights pledging to establish free education.\textsuperscript{5} However, with a conservative shift in spending priorities in the early 1980s, average tuition fees at English Canadian universities and colleges began a steadily upward climb. In 1995, the federal Liberals declared a cut of $7 billion in public funding to programs, including post-secondary education, health-care, housing, and social assistance.\textsuperscript{6} These post-secondary education cuts resulted in the largest tuition fee increases in

\textsuperscript{4} Appendix 1
\textsuperscript{6} Ibid.
Canadian history. 25 January 1995 marked the first-ever national student day-long
strike with 100,000 students marching across Canada.7

As universities lost federal funding in the 1990s, a downsizing of the rest of the
public sector was also occurring. As a result, services such as education and health
care were increasingly subject to private sector management techniques as the
government altered public agencies along private sector lines, promoting public
agencies that would view people as “customers.”8 This restructuring prioritized casual
and flexible labour, of which graduate students are ideal candidates. Most teaching
assistants are hired on a semester-to-semester basis, often they must reapply for their
jobs. They are a transient group because their stay in the university for two to ten
years. Also, TAs are vulnerable because their supervisor is often a professor in their
department, if not their direct degree supervisors. Being part of a Union offers basic
protection to the precarious status of these workers.

The changing nature of the University has not only affected those who work
in this institution but who is able to attend. The strategy to win tuition rebates within
teaching assistant unions in Canada must be part of an overall commitment and
strategy to eliminate tuition fees for all students. If teaching assistants are able to win

7 Jen Watt, “‘English-Canadian’ Student Movement Stalled in mid-90s,” Rabble.ca, January 30, 2007,
8 David Osborne and Ted Gaebler, “Reinventing Government: How the Entrepreneurial Spirit is
Transforming the Public Sector” quoted in Sylvia Fuller, “Public Sector Employment and Gender
Wage Inequalities in British Columbia: Assessing the Effects of a Shrinking Public Sector,” Canadian
tuition rebates, then graduate student employees must fight alongside students in abolishing tuition.

The goal of this project is to create activist research that can be used for union members to further organize around tuition rebates. As a result, I develop concrete suggestions for the TSSU to be more effective in organizing around tuition by looking at how texts and specific institutions play a role in collective bargaining.

Some fundamental beliefs and questions drive this work. What would an elimination of fees resemble, and what would it take to win that demand? What is the type of “education” students want to see? What is necessary for the Union to win its tuition demands? How would a democratic union that is reflective of its membership be structured?

My work is informed by a personal commitment to the liberation of people: economic justice for all and the eventual elimination of capitalism for a non-hierarchical, self-managed, directly democratic and decentralized society. The rebuilding from below of education and union institutions are necessary parts of that process. To begin thinking about a better world, students and workers must demand the democratization of education and of unions to act as a challenging force against capitalist ruling relations.

The common ruling ideology in the University is that graduate students are in a trainee and mentorship role, and are not workers. I believe we are graduate students
and workers, and I believe that teaching assistants are in a unique position of both privilege and power in terms of fighting the corporate university from this standpoint. We are workers with specific leverage via a collective negotiation process, and I feel it is important that graduate students build upon this privilege and demonstrate a commitment to public education for future generations of students. Our worker status should be utilized as a tool for being on the forefront of eradicating tuition fees based on notions of justice and equality.

During my one-year position as an elected and paid union officer, I strategized with many other graduate students across Canada. I knew how teaching assistants at other universities had succeeded in securing language on tuition through an unapologetic assertion of their collective bargaining rights. However, I was also aware that SFU managers continuously told the TSSU that tuition rebates were not a possibility. This resulted in an identifiable disjuncture, which separated the local organization and the lives of graduate student workers from the objective, bureaucratic domain of the university.

Five recurring themes emerge from teaching assistant unions in the struggle for tuition rebates across Canada. First, if graduate student employees want to win language on tuition, they must be willing to strike. CUPE 3903 at York University demonstrated that teaching assistants must be willingly embrace this battle in each
collective negotiation process. Second, a common strategy from university management includes appending a letter of agreement on tuition, which is valid only for the life of one collective agreement and then not renegotiated. Third, some university Board of Governors, such as the one at University of British Columbia, gave students “free tuition” during a particularly effective negotiation process that was later cancelled. Fourth, most universities exclude the word “tuition” from the collective agreement to depoliticize the issue. Instead, administration will use the word “scholarships”. For example, the University of Guelph graduate student employee union has received a letter of agreement on tuition in one round and then a lump sum instead of language on tuition in another. The erosion of language on tuition in the bargaining process is already well under way. Fifth, university administrations have clearly coordinated to ensure there are substantial roadblocks to effective organizing by TA unions for tuition rebates, and it is time that teaching assistants also strategize on collective bargaining and tuition. The fate of tuition

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10 Collective Agreement between Board of Govenors, Simon Fraser University and the Teaching Support Staff Union, Letter of Agreement between Teaching Support Staff Union and Simon Fraser University, Appendix N, 2001-2004.
14 Collective Agreement between University of Guelph and Canadian Union of Public Employees 3913-Unit #1, Wages, 57, 2005-2008.
struggles for graduate students in Canada, it is important that teaching assistants understand the terrain in where these conflicts will occur.

After tuition fees started rising across Canada in the 1990s, Teaching Assistants started organizing for tuition provisions in their collective agreements. The funding changes to the universities have been staggering. The fear of student debt and increased tuition fees has undermined equal access to post secondary education, as the average student debt in some provinces is over $25,000. In 2005, Statistics Canada's Participation in Post Secondary Education in Canada study remarked that those in the top quartile of income are twice as likely to go on to university as those in the bottom quartile.\textsuperscript{15} As of 2005, the federal cash contribution for post secondary education is the lowest it has been in twenty-five years.\textsuperscript{16} Changes to university funding structures are the result of reductions in federal government cash transfers made to the provinces and changes to provincial fiscal arrangements lead institutions to drastically increase fees. The BC government resisted the trend to increase tuition through the 1990s, but a change in government in 2001 saw the province follow suit. The BC government lifted the tuition freeze in 2002 allowing institutions to decide on the level of fees. BC students then fought and won a three-year cap on tuition increases;


the cap ended in 2005. However, in BC as of 2007 graduate students are paying 185% more than in 2001.

As university workers, the wages for teaching assistants' are negotiated with a human resources department that is in direct contact with the provincial government that funds the employees. Therefore, university workers are considered to be public sector workers because universities have traditionally been government funded entities. Teaching assistants are often part of unions made up of other contingent teaching and research workers on campuses. In response to overall rising fees, teaching assistants across Canada argue that every time tuition goes up, they receive a wage cut. As Clarice Kuhling explains, "...tuition works as a ready made mechanism for management to claw back any gains workers might win." Because paying tuition is a condition of employment for teaching assistants, tuition increases act a wage roll back. Data from the 2001-2002 academic year at SFU, collected from 900 graduate students demonstrates that for a PhD or MA student enrolled in 3 semesters, which is a full year at SFU, 57% received a teaching assistant or sessional instructor position.

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while 44% receive a non-unionized research assistantship position.20 In 2005, there were 2745 registered MA and PhD students at SFU. Graduate students at SFU are highly likely to be University employees and Union members several times over the course of their degree. Based on the current funding climate, these Union members could greatly benefit from a tuition waiver.

Graduate students in the US have also been working towards protection through unions. Canada’s post-secondary education system is “public,” but graduate students in the US choose between public and private systems of post secondary education. In the United States, graduate student funding varies depending on whether or not one enters into a public or private institution. In the private university system, tuition is incorporated into graduate funding packages and often covered by endowment monies. Graduate students in the US might have tuition covered by scholarships or waivers but students are less likely to have overall union protection. In the United States, the unionization of graduate student workers is not as widespread as it is in Canada and institutions in the US prioritize the accessibility of graduate student education in attempting to provide guaranteed funding for the term of a student’s degree. Today twenty Canadian campuses have TA unions, with an

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additional three organizing drives currently in process. In the US there are only twenty-eight recognized unions and nine unrecognized, which is surprising considering the large number of campuses. Graduate students at private schools such as New York University are fighting for the basic right to unionize, while in Canada the university sector is one of the few areas where union membership is increasing.

The right for students in the US to unionize hinges on an ongoing debate about whether the work of graduate students is wage labour or graduate training. In 2004, the Republican appointed National Labour Relations Board reversed a graduate student employee union positive ruling from two years earlier. This latest ruling states that graduate teaching and research assistants at private universities are not workers and that they are therefore not entitled to form unions. This resulted in a 10-month strike for Local 2110 of the United Auto Workers at New York University who went back to work without a contract or the right to collective bargaining. The work of graduate students, however, extends beyond the gift of having teaching duties.

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25 Ibid., 92.
Michael Gallope compares PhD work to a five-year contract where the university expects a return on their investment:

In some cases we are still in coursework, we profess, perform and produce as active scholars. And unlike faculty members who may receive pay increases based on the amount and quantity of work they produce, graduate students produce this work for free.27

The labour of graduate students contributes to the climate of what Slaughter and Rhoades have called “academic capitalism.”28 Under this system, the unrecognized work of graduate students is intrinsic to the functioning of the institution. In 1969 Stanley Aronowitz went to the University of Wisconsin to talk to speak to what would be the first unionized graduate students in the US and observed: “Far from being apprentices, many taught classes with almost no supervision, prepared lessons, graded papers, and provided undergraduates with academic counselling.”29 Despite the heavy emphasis placed on the student status of graduate student employees by ruling regimes in the US, accounts of the every day lives of students greatly differ. As the recent ruling out of the US demonstrates, graduate student workers must continue to assert that they are workers and that this process is not simply part of an apprenticeship experience. In order for students to gain respect and dignity for the

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teaching they do, they must admit that it is an exploitative relationship based on under-valued labour and demand recognition as workers.

Unlike the US, the unionization of graduate student workers proliferated in Canada in two waves, the first being in the 1970s and the second in the 1990s. The TSSU at SFU began as the Association of University and College Employees (AUCE) Local 6 and was chartered in September of 1976. AUCE won the legal designation status as a union two years later and became the official voice representing teaching support staff at SFU.\(^{30}\) The University of Toronto graduate student union received certification in 1974, followed by York in 1975 and Regina, Lakehead, and AUCE at SFU in 1978.\(^{31}\) Therefore, the unionization of graduate students, although it began at the same time as the US, is far more widespread.

While an emerging body of literature examines various specific aspects of the contemporary University, including commercialization,\(^ {32}\) and academic labour,\(^ {33}\) there are very few projects which look at issue specific teaching assistant unions in Canada. Although there have been several anthologies on graduate student organizing in the United States, much of this work focuses on personal accounts of organizing a specific

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local, rather than a broader analysis of trends within such unions. In 2005, Zinni, Singh, and MacLennan elaborate on the history of graduate student unions in Canada describing the concerns of bargaining and strikes. The authors contend that graduate students unions are growing to alleviate the strain put on these students by both their universities and the government. Recently, many articles have appeared on the increasing reliance on sessional instructors in Canada as fewer tenure track positions are posted. The "death of the tenure track" is far more widespread in the US than in Canada, but these changes are happening here. This indicates that unionization of academic labour is a growing scholarly area of study which may continue to grow as there is a rise of contingent faculty members in Canada.

The battle over tuition and collective agreements in Canada started in 1996 when Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) Local 3903 had its first win against tuition relief in the form of a rebate. Local 3903 has been on the forefront of fighting the increased financial burden for graduate students. In that bargaining round, CUPE 3903 won a $250 tuition rebate per term for Teaching Assistants and $2,000 guaranteed funding for summer work. Then in 1998, the Union also sought and won language on tuition indexation in their collective agreement, which would

have allowed graduate student workers relief as tuition increased. Unfortunately, a "graduate financial assistance package" eroded that tuition language in 2000 and York University continues to insist that the financial assistance provided through the Union is not tied to tuition. The removal of this language from the collective agreement coincided with 3903's epic 78-day long strike where for the first time tuition was the central issue. During bargaining in 2005, the President of York University announced that tuition fees would not increase for most of its 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 graduate programs, thereby undercutting the union. CUPE 3903's effective history with tuition and strength as a union local is largely based on a strong rank and file, and leadership who insist on working towards a democratic structure.

In 2000, CUPE 3902 representing teaching assistants at the University of Toronto joined the fight against tuition and went out on strike showing their colleagues from across the city that they too thought tuition was worth campaigning for. The TAs were earning on average of $4,100 per course and could not even cover their annual tuition fees of $5,100. The administration requested to change positions on the issue and argued that tuition rebates would not be fair to graduate students who were not part of the Union. Additionally, they claimed tuition rebates would cost the University millions of unbudgeted dollars. In the end, the University and the

38 Kuhling, How CUPE, 78.
39 Kristen Rushowy and Tracy Huffman, "Strike Could Cut Classes at University of Toronto; 2,400 Teaching Assistants Seek Tuition Rebates," Toronto Star, January 8, 2000, 1.
Union settled a deal, which resulted in signing bonuses of $525 in lieu of tuition language. In 2005, CUPE 3902 again gave a strike mandate to their bargaining committee with the main issue being tuition. Archana Rampure, chair of the local, stated that “teaching assistants voted in record numbers because concerns about tuition and funding have struck a chord across the three University of Toronto campuses.”

The Union and the University settled with additional money being allocated to the Union Financial Assistance Fund and the right to give out this money to offset tuition fee increases. However, when the local went to prepare its annual member information sheet, which the University distributes to all TAs, administration threatened to refuse distribution of the sheet if CUPE referred to the funds as a “Tuition Assistance Fund.” The University distributed a censored version to incoming students through a University mail out, but all other Union materials carry the words “tuition”.

The refusal of the University to print the word tuition on any information demonstrates the strong desire to suppress any further organizing on tuition in the TA union.

Inspired by the union actions in Toronto, graduate student workers at Carleton University, CUPE local 4600, won language on indexation in 2003 and again in 2006. The Union stated that this achievement allows students to see the potential

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for movement on tuition. “...if the university can afford to freeze fees for half of grads, it can afford to do it for all of us.”42 CUPE 4600 has had language on tuition in their last four collective agreements and in every round of bargaining they were very close to striking, often giving their strike notice. The tuition rebate has a cap of $700 and uses the tuition rate from 2001 and 2005 as a reference point. Having this clause in the collective agreement ensures that wage increases are not clawed back by tuition increases.

More recently, in 2006, graduate students at McMaster University were on strike for the second time over tuition. In “An Open Letter to McMaster’s Teaching Assistants,” the acting VP Academic of the University wrote that

...as a central part of its demands, CUPE has proposed that tuition rates be frozen at the 2005 levels. McMaster is negotiating the employment earnings of TAs. Tuition fees are a spending decision made by students to acquire their education.43

The spirit of this argument is that wages and tuition are two separate issues. Despite a strike, management refused to move on tuition and the Union settled without tuition language.

Most graduate student employee unions in Canada have attempted to incorporate tuition rebates into their collective agreements. In the spring of 2007, I

contacted the twenty-two certified graduate student employee unions in Canada and received responses from seventeen of those unions. Out of seventeen Teaching Assistant unions in Canada, three currently have language on “tuition.” However, over half of the unions have had language at some point and all but two have attempted to incorporate this language in their agreements.

Graduate students at Simon Fraser University also have a long history with tuition as one of the first TA unions in Canada. Even before graduate students at SFU joined the Association of University and College Employees (AUCE), they were attempting to secure tuition rebates. In 1966, recommendations for graduate student teaching assistants were presented to the Universities Council of British Columbia by members of the Graduate Student Association at SFU. Of their five demands, the first stated: “Tuition fee waivers for all GTAs.” Graduate students at SFU again brought up tuition in 1972, this time arguing that all students should be free from fees. The Graduate Student Union sought to “abolish graduate tuition fees.” Feminists established AUCE as a socialist structure in opposition to mainstream unions. In 1976, when graduate students at SFU joined, the Union represented clerical and secretarial staff at three universities and two colleges. Local 6 was the last local to join and now the TSSU is the only AUCE local still in existence, keeping its status as an independent union while most other AUCE locals affiliated with CUPE. In 1976, the

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first round of TSSU contract negotiations, there was a scholarship given to graduate teaching assistants as part of their overall “salary,” negotiated in order to offset the cost of tuition. To this day, a “scholarship” awarded which differs based solely on whether you are a Masters or Doctoral candidate. Tuition reappeared in the collective agreement in the 1988-1990 contract when the Union negotiated a tuition waiver for Continuing Language Instructors. They received a partial waiver for undergraduate courses and a full waiver for graduate program tuition fees. These employees received the waivers because they most closely resembled the full time employees of the other university bargaining units who all receive tuition waivers.

In the last collective agreement, a $70 tuition waiver was paid for in part by the University and in part deducted from the TSSU’s Childcare Fund. The Childcare Bursary was negotiated in the previous round. However, because the money was organized through the Financial Aid office, despite it being union members’ own money, many had a difficult time meeting the criteria to access the funds. The letter of agreement on tuition, which was not secure because it was not negotiated into the entire contract, appeared in the 2001-2004 collective agreement through the mediation process. The letter gave students a “tuition account credit of $40 for each

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45 Collective Agreement between Board of Governors, Simon Fraser University and the Teaching Support Staff Union, Tuition Waiver for Continuing Language Instructors, 1988-1990.

46 Collective Agreement Between Board of Governors, Simon Fraser University and the Teaching Support Staff Union, Letter of Agreement Between Teaching Support Staff Union and Simon Fraser University, 2001-2004.
semester in which s/he is enrolled.” The other $30 came from the childcare bursary which amounted to $100,000 of student monies which were originally dedicated to Union members with children. The government’s wage mandate for public sector workers during this bargaining period was 0% increases for the period of the agreement. However, in mediation the offer changed to 2% increases each year and the dedication of 1% of University payroll towards a tuition waiver. The University caved this money for tuition out of their budget and the managers changed their language and immediately started to call it a “credit”. If the University were to use the word “waiver” it would be viewed in the eyes of the government as a benefit, and as included in part of the PSEC package. Therefore, the negotiation of tuition at SFU had nothing to do with the government, but was paid for by the University, whereas wage increases came from PSEC. The acceptance of this $70 was controversial as indicated in the two Ratification Information Sessions. As one Union member named Peter explained in the information session:

I'll speak personally...there seems to be collective amnesia here regarding the tuition waiver...our primary issue...what we have now is a token figure...we could double it and it would still be insignificant...it is unacceptable for me...47 (original break in speaking recorded)

Some students saw the 1% payroll commitment and the instability of a letter of agreement as insufficient. Several members ran a “NO” campaign that year stating,

“our wages from here on in will be decreasing every year as tuition fees increase”. The entire package passed, however, as a result the TSSU witnessed how the administration could realign its finances for tuition when the threat of a strike was strong enough. But as some warned, at the end of the last round of bargaining in 2004, the letter of agreement on tuition was not renewed by the University. Since its inception, the TSSU has negotiated eleven collective agreements, the first agreement in 1980 and the most recent dated 2004-2010.

As these struggles over tuition demonstrate, the coordination of graduate student bargaining around tuition is not simply a problem to take up with the University’s Human Resources department, but is rooted in a process of public sector regulation, social organization, and state formation. In the following, I look at how ruling relations at SFU shape graduate students’ inability to secure a tuition waiver in their 2004-2010 contract. As a union activist, it is important for me to use a method of inquiry that recognizes the importance of activist knowledge grounded in theory while allowing for the space to be critical of our practices in order to ultimately be more effective.

In order to talk about teaching assistants and tuition, I begin with “Institutional Ethnography” (IE) developed by Dorothy Smith. For this project, I draw on the importance how texts can offer insight into how ruling relations function in

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48 Appendix 3.
order to produce more effective forms of action. Specifically, IE allows the union activist-researcher to examine how texts coordinate forms of ruling in bargaining.\textsuperscript{49}

Smith also emphasizes the importance of knowledge based in one's everyday world. Therefore, I contend along with Dorothy Smith that one's personal experiences only enhance one's ability to assess and know about relations of ruling.\textsuperscript{50}

My own process of exploration begins in the experiences of graduate students and their attempts to pay tuition and teach while studying. People are expert practitioners of their own lives; from the point of view of IE, the researcher's "problematic" is to be learned from them, and to investigate how their activities are coordinated.\textsuperscript{51}

In IE, the term "text" is strictly material in a form, that enables replication of the written, drawn or otherwise reproduced.\textsuperscript{52} Therefore, emphasizing materiality allows one to see how a text presents itself in our everyday world. On their own, texts do not do anything, but people use them to organize and coordinate social organization. By examining how people interact with institutions and by analyzing the documents that coordinate their lives, it is possible to compare and contrast those

\textsuperscript{49} Dorothy Smith, \textit{Institutional Ethnography as Practice} (Toronto: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006), 19.
\textsuperscript{50} Dorothy Smith, \textit{The Everyday World as Problematic} (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), 105.
\textsuperscript{51} Marie Campbell and Frances Gregor. \textit{Mapping Social Relations: A Primer in Doing Institutional Ethnography}. (Aurora: Garamond Press, 2002), 49.
\textsuperscript{52} Dorothy Smith, \textit{Institutional Ethnography: A Sociology for People} (Toronto: Altamira Press, 2005), 228.
relations of ruling with the personal experiences. To be clear, IE’s focus is on the activation of texts rather than their meaning. Smith further elaborates:

In general, I want to learn more about how texts coordinate subjectivities or consciousness, the latter conceived as ‘active’ and inseparable from people in their activities, and, in this context, how texts that universalize or objectify, create forms of consciousness that override the ‘naturally’ occurring diversity of perspectives and experiences.  

It is in the ruling relations of text-mediated organization that we can see texts extended into the economic sphere and investigate how actual people accomplish and organize them. It is not about giving agency and power to the text, but about discussing how the text coordinates action.

Further, texts have the capacity of a “double presence” where they are read and produced in the everyday (in work or other activities), while at the same time they are reproduced in a number of settings. For example, a collective agreement begins as proposals written by the Union and the University and at the end of the process the final text is produced by the University into a booklet and circulated to Union members. The text enters into the course of action when it is coordinated into a local and particular setting in which the social relation extents beyond the text

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53 Dorothy Smith, Writing the Social: Critique, Theory and Investigation (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 196.
moment. For example, when a student is ill and refers to the collective agreement before telling their professor, the collective agreement as a text becomes activated in that local setting.

I will examine two documents that played a role in the TSSU’s last round of bargaining in Chapter 3. The first document directly relates to a decision made at the Labour Relations Board on tuition, while the second document relates to bargaining provincially. At the University of British Columbia, teaching assistants in CUPE 2278 went out on strike over tuition in 2003. Mark Brown, arbitrator with the Labour Relations Board, explains in his decision why he did not award CUPE 2278 with the requested language on tuition in their collective agreement. I use this text to look at the textual coordination of bargaining.

The second text I look at coordinates public sector bargaining in order to allow for a more “efficient and effective workforce.” Through the Public Sector Employer’s Council (PSEC), the Minister of Labour facilitated longer collective agreements and signing bonuses as a way to achieving labour peace through the end of the 2010 Olympics. As a result, on 5 April 2006, the TSSU ratified a contract without language on tuition from 1 May 2004-30 April 2010. This contract included

55 Smith, Institutional Ethnography as Practice, 103.
signing bonuses for members ranging from $300-$3000. Afterwards, I will examine how a document from the Public Sector Employers Council (PSEC) instructed the University on how to bargain. The combination of these texts provides clear guidance to map out social relations used by the University using IE.

In Chapter 4, I will consider Gary Kinsman's work on “Mapping the Social Relations of Struggle” to better grasp what institutions the Union is connected to and up against, if unions are to secure any future language on tuition in collective agreements. The idea of mapping the social relations of struggle is influenced by a strand of IE, which views activists’ confrontations as an ethnographic resource. Kinsman’s position argues that one’s participation in social movements is not separate from research, and that activists are constantly theorizing their practice. This thesis also incorporates suggestions and recommendations for future TSSU actions in relationship to tuition and broader union strategies.

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CHAPTER 2:
INSTITUTIONAL ETHNOGRAPHY
AND MAPPING THE SOCIAL RELATIONS OF STRUGGLE

The work of Dorothy Smith and her method of inquiry, Institutional Ethnography, is central to this project because of the emphasis her writing places on local activities and material conditions. As I will highlight, the focus on people's everyday experiences and the use of texts in the coordination of people's activities are useful starting points for activist research. Academics and activists who worked with Dorothy Smith have also taken her work further, and in this chapter I focus on the writing of George Smith as well as Gary Kinsman's mapping of the social relations of struggle.

The sociology that emerges from Dorothy Smith's work describes a social organization of knowledge emphasizing the everyday and "the social" as the starting point of analysis. This emphasizes people's knowledge as socially and materially organized, as produced by individuals in actual settings, and as organized by social relations.59

Developed out of the feminist movement as a reaction to the male-dominated discipline of North American sociology in the 1970s, Smith argues that the conceptualization of this discipline was a male activity, and that standpoints arose from connections of knowledge rooted in the body, specifically in the particularities of the local setting. Her diverse work situations in the home as a single mother and as a professor in the academy allowed her to identify two ways of thinking. Smith saw that moving from one location to another required "a different organization of memory, attention, relevances and objectives, and indeed different presences."  

Dorothy Smith's method of inquiry, Institutional Ethnography, draws from Marx to argue against forms of research that claim to be objective and points out how situated experiences provide a specific look at ruling relations. Smith discovered that women's experiences were missing from sociology and recognized the importance in beginning in the everyday. Smith looked back at how the subject was used in research and how her own consciousness fit into the work, in which she was engaged. Emphasizing the knowledge of people who are the subject of your starting point reorganizes the social relations of knowledge.

IE differs from tradition forms of research because it begins research with people's experiences, and not with theoretical concepts. It aims to "create a way of seeing, from where we actually live, into the powers, processes, and relations that

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organize and determine the everyday context of that seeing.” 61 IE provides methodological direction for starting in the everyday. 62 “The everyday” is where people are located: what they do, what they know, their social relations. It “refers to the translation of an actual property of the social relations or organization of our/ people’s ordinary doings into a topic for ethnographic research.” 63 The everyday world is not to be turned into an object of study, but instead is to be a lens for doing research. 64 Starting from everyday experiences shifts the gaze from the oppressor to the oppressed. People are expert practitioners of their own lives and so from the point of view of I.E., the researcher’s “problematic” is to be learned from them, and is to investigate how their activities are coordinated.

Readers often misunderstand Dorothy Smith’s work as a “Standpoint Theory” which privileges women’s experience as a method of research. One must consider the context of Smith’s work, as it emerged as a way of thinking heavily influenced by the women’s movement. She proposes that knowledge is socially organized, and can not be attributed to simply an individual consciousness (for example, women’s’).

61 Ibid., 9.
62 Campbell, Marie and Ann Manicom. Introduction to Knowledge, Experience and Ruling Relations. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 8.
63 Smith, Institutional Ethnography: A Sociology, 39.
During research interviews, often a disjuncture between people’s lived experiences and the ideology of a ruling regime will become the starting point for the study of the social relations. The researcher may know what they want to explain, but will only decide which texts and discourses to examine, or which interviews to conduct through the process. Institutional ethnography proposes that by looking at how institutions function, we can also figure out how to tear them apart. This is achieved by a specific mapping of the ruling regimes from the perspective of those who engage with them, as well as how texts are used within the institution.

The terms “institution” and “institutional” identify a complex set of ruling relations that form part of a ruling apparatus that is organized around a distinctive function such as education, health care and law. “Institution” highlights the intersection and coordination of more than one relational mode of ruling. 65

The “text” plays an integral part in Institutional Ethnography as a way in which to understand how social relations are organized. The text is a way to illuminate the practices of ruling regimes. 66 In IE, the term “text” is used here strictly to identify texts as material in a form that enables replication of what is written, drawn or otherwise reproduced. Materiality is emphasized because we can see how a text can be present in our everyday world and at the same time connect us into

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65 Smith, The Everyday, 160.
66 Frampton, Sociology, 2006.
institutional relations. Dorothy Smith centres her method of inquiry around text-mediated social organization and explains that textual forms are crucial to how ruling relations come to be organized: "the functions of organization and control are increasingly vested in distinct, specialized, and (to some extent) autonomic forms of organization and relations mediated by texts."

Frequently associated with cultural anthropology, the process of ethnography entails a close and prolonged observation of a particular group. The goal of ethnography has been to gain understanding about a particular culture by prolonged observation. Criticized for their imperialist underpinnings, ethnographers have traditionally entered into cultures to study them. This process has involved a profound "Othering" and distancing from the culture they are examining. However, at their best, "ethnographies have traditionally been viewed as a more progressive research method in their attempt to get as close as possible to the site of research." Smith's alternative ethnography serves as a way to turn ruling relations against institutions. Therefore, her version of ethnography allows for a greater understanding of how ruling relations function, particularly in local settings. In relationship to her

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70 Ibid., 75.
work, Smith explains: “ethnography highlights exploration, description, and analysis or a complex of relations...”72 It is not intended to limit the ways in which one can observe and interview, because the process of ethnography is where one can reveal the social relations individuals invoke through their own practices. For activists, ethnography allows for a detailed analysis of their opponent’s forms of ruling.

Dorothy Smith views material conditions in relation to a larger Marxist perspective that informs her work. She states,

although Marx and Engels insist that consciousness must be recognized as always in and of individual people, they do not provide for us a way of understanding or analyzing those social relations—forms of coordination—that have emerged largely since their work was completed.73

For example, Smith cites the shift to corporate forms of enterprise as an example of an emerging development. Returning to Marx’s analysis of capitalism she extends that critique to include the textual modes of ruling.

The application of Dorothy Smith’s work has taken several different forms. One particular stand is committed to rooting Smith’s methods in ways that can be of use to activists. Political Activist Ethnography (PAE) is the activist component that has developed from Institutional Ethnography. PAE lays the groundwork for promoting a method of inquiry for activist engagement. Taking Dorothy Smith’s

72 Smith, The Everyday, 160.
73 Smith, Institutional Ethnography: A Sociology, 69.
method of inquiry further, George Smith asserts that political confrontation is an ethnographic resource.

As a student of Dorothy Smith's, George Smith understood that through activists' daily work with ruling regimes, they were discovering what the ethnographer attempts to explore and make observable. Ultimately, this form of knowledge is often not one which academia has recognized. In his work on the AIDS epidemic, George Smith identifies a rupture in experience. He saw the prevalent ideology about AIDS which suggested that it was a “fatal disease”. However, he knew plenty of people who were surviving, but required immediate and intensive care. In this instance, the ideology of the régime ruptured, since many people living with HIV and AIDS knew from their own experience to be different. This disjuncture occurred when there was a discovery of the local organization of the lives of men living with AIDS versus the bureaucracy of the regime and the ideology created out of social organization. These problems in knowing- the cracks based on personal experience and personal accounts - provided the “problematic” and starting point for research. Specifically he asked, “How is the delivery of AIDS treatments in Ontario organized?” As a result, the activist group with which he was involved took on the work of combating the ideological view that AIDS was a fatal disease to move towards

a treatment-based model. As George Smith saw it, research studies were designed to be circulated among members of grassroots organizations.

"Mapping the social relations of struggle" by Gary Kinsman expands the method of inquiry by Dorothy Smith and George Smith. He extends the emphasis of research for activists in the work of George Smith to the concept of "mapping the social" developed by Dorothy Smith and Campbell and Gregor.75 The idea of mapping the social relations of struggle requires a drawing out of how broader social relations enter into the shaping of people's everyday/night worlds. As Campbell and Gregor explain, "mapping those relations allows analysts to identify how things are organized, how people's lives are ruled."76 Kinsman's work attempts to steer traditional forms of Institutional Ethnography from away from fixation on ruling regimes, for the lack of connection to grassroots struggle can result in an analysis that exclusively looks at the strategies of management and regulation.77 "Mapping the social relations of struggle" pushes IE to develop the relations between conflicts in ruling relations and social movements and literally sketch them out instead of simply looking at ruling relationships. Further, the practice of mapping is an attempt to ensure that activists can utilize the skills developed in IE, instead of keeping IE as a fixed and specialized form of knowledge production. Following the crux of Marxist

77 Frampton, New Directions, 261.
social theory, this work involves showing the social organization of what we are fighting, our capacities, and our allies.

This mapping is an engaged and reflexive map-making from the standpoint of those who are oppressed. It is dependent on context and determined in relation to people’s experiences. Part of this mapping involves activists being able to position themselves in order to further the analysis of their “enemies”. Just as a mapping of the relations of ruling needs to happen in IE, so too does a mapping of our sources of agency. As Kinsman cautions, “it is a mistake to see this mapping out of social relations as simply a technical matter, since it is also very much a political and social undertaking.”

For example, in a workshop I conducted with Kinsman in May 2007, we took the Vancouver Anti-Poverty Committee’s organizing against the Olympics and mapped out their allies as well as the institutional relations of ruling they are in confrontation with. Through this process, we were able to further understand the ways in which APC was being targeted as a “violent” organization and in mapping out their allies, we also saw how they were being marginalized by several fragments of the left.

A starting point to develop more effective forms of activism, the maps on their own do not do anything but the knowledge gained from the mapping needs to be utilized. This is an attempt to make our activist work apparent and more decisive.

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Following George Smith, one central aspect to this work is a move away from speculating how institutions function to probing our everyday interactions with these ruling relations. As Kinsman explains:

We need theory connected to and constantly transformed and enriched by practice that can assist us in mapping out social relations of struggle, identifying sites where progress is possible and developing strategies for fighting to win our struggles.79

By providing a concrete practice of mapping out the social relations of struggle, a grounded social knowledge emerges. As I will demonstrate in Chapter 4, this practice places activity and agency at the centre of the map so that activists have the ability to see their own capacities and resources.

Discourse analysis is important to briefly discuss in the context of this thesis because of the way it is utilized as a theory and a method to analyze texts. Discourse analysis is a broad label describing an approach to researching the use of written or spoken language. This form of investigation enables a reader to reveal the motivations behind a text through a deconstructive interpretation, which sees each text is part of a larger discourse. The term “discourse” itself originates in semiotics but is widely associated with an attempt to identify practices of using language, often centred on the level of statements in connection to systematic forms of social power.80 It is a way

79 Kinsman, Mapping, 156.
of speaking about the world of the social and a way to produce and organize meaning in a social context.

Michel Foucault, considered by many to be a post-structuralist, developed a philosophy of the subject where the subject is defined within discourse by the various positions they occupy and as a result, selfhood is “dispersed” in statements that are beyond our control.\textsuperscript{81} This perspective on the subject can also be a disconcerting viewpoint, as it emphasizes the extent to which our selfhood is scattered beyond us, rather than beginning with us. The ensuing idea is that our identities as agents in discourse are themselves aspects of discourse.

Orthodox versions of Dorothy Smith and Foucault share much in common in defining discourse. Both centre on texts, power, and state relations. Dorothy Smith’s latest work builds from the conception of discourse used by Foucault. She refers to discourse as the ruling relations that coordinate the practices of an individual’s talking, writing, and reading in particular places at particular times.\textsuperscript{82} Like Foucault, Smith argues discourse constrains what one can write or say. However, what one does is replicated and modifies discourse. She states that, “Though discourse is regulated in various ways, each moment of discourse in action both reproduces and remakes it.”\textsuperscript{83} Smith uses Foucault’s version of discourse to designate a class of relations that

\textsuperscript{81} Foucault, \textit{The Archeology}, 55.
\textsuperscript{82} Smith, \textit{Institutional Ethnography: A Sociology}, 244.
\textsuperscript{83} Ibid.
organize the local on a larger level while keeping the agency of the subject in the centre.

From Foucault's perspective, various social practices and institutions (for example, those of education and politics, religion and the law) are both constituted by and situated within forms of discourse. Those who use orthodox forms of IE want to focus on how to see discourse as an organizer of experience while maintaining one's analytic interest in the subject. To discover how ideas carried in texts actually affect people's lives, Smith wants us to understand that people participate in discursive activity. What Foucault conceptualized as knowledge/power is for Smith a social relationship that comes into play as actual people participate in knowing and acting knowledgeably.

The major critique of Foucauldian work by those who have studied with Smith is his fixation on the operation of ruling relations, which can obscure possibilities for social change. A close reading of a text differs from traditional forms of discourse analysis in IE in that the subject remains at the centre of the reading. Some forms of discourse analysis can be accommodate in IE, as George Smith has done, provided that personal experience remains threaded throughout the subject, that knowledge is viewed as a social relationship, and that discursive relations are

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84 Ibid., 41.
85 Ibid.
produced by people. Overall, however IE is more useful for my work because of the possibilities for social change, which come out of looking at texts.
CHAPTER 3: TEXTS AS COORDINATORS OF ACTION: LABOUR RELATIONS BOARD ON TUITION AND PROVINCIAL BARGAINING MANDATE

This chapter describes the textual coordination of two documents in collective bargaining. I will first lay out the conditions for the activation of these documents, and then explain what they show us about specific aspects of university and provincial bargaining work. This will demonstrate how lived experiences are transposed into a textual domain.

Labour Relations Board Ruling

The basis for the framework of the BC Labour Relations Board (LRB) emerged from federal legislation passed in 1944 under the War Measures Act. This legislation provided the legal action for union organizing, certification, and enshrined the grievance/arbitrator relationship to the labour relations process. Many have criticised this legislation as shifting the power from workers to trade union leaders, and that the LRB entrenched the power of employers over unions as it created a hierarchical structure where leaders met to negotiation with employers. The Board is an arm of

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the government that mediates disputes between employers and employees across the province. It is governed by a Labour Relations Code (the “Code”), which sets the rules for unionized workplaces. The Code can be amended by legislation which means that it is vulnerable because it can be altered based on the government is in power. The Code provides the rules for organizing a union, and for collective bargaining, and outlines the responsibilities of unions and employers. The Board has the exclusive jurisdiction to hear and decide on issues arising in the workplace by awarding decisions that are binding on the parties. The LRB consists of the chair, a number of vice-chairs, and an equal number of part-time representatives of both employers and unions, all called “members.” The provincial cabinet appoints all these LRB affiliates for specific terms of office, and each has experience in the field of labour relations. The Board and the Code that governs it have substantial power in shaping union organizing across the province. In examining the LRB under the Liberals, Patrick Dickie writes:

Quite simply, there has been a failure by both the government and the Labour Relations Board to fully appreciate the fundamental power imbalance that exists between employees and employers, and the consequent need for laws and administrative procedures that serve to protect the fundamental right of employees to associate together in unions. 

Therefore, when the party in power is interested in large profits for business rules can be changed in order to limit the level of union certification. Further, the Liberal government of Gordon Campbell has been accused of tampering with the LRB when it fired three board members in 2006. Since 2002, the number of unorganized employees who are certified in BC has decreased because of changes to the Code and there is much need for revising this trend.

The decision I will be looking at comes from the adjudication division and is a binding decision. The Board has two divisions: an adjudication division and a mediation division. Through the adjudication division, the Board conducts formal hearings or requests written submissions and adjudicates complaints and applications under the Code for example, arbitrations. The mediation division supports employers and unions in collective bargaining. The mediator does not make decisions, but acts as a third party to help two parties come to an agreement. A decision made at the Labour Relations Board falls under the "Common Law" meaning that decisions are shaped by precedent and binding to particular jurisdictions. Generally, through the binding arbitration process an arbitrator is willing to make a ruling that allows

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90 Dickie, The Crisis, 6.
workers to be on par with others in a similar sector.\textsuperscript{91} However, each decision needs to be read within the context of the specific labour climate.

A decision coming out of a Labour Relation Board will be the first text which I use to look at. CUPE 2278 represents teaching assistants, tutors, markers, and non-credit language instructors at the University of British Columbia. On 31 August 2002, their collective agreement expired and was accompanied by a letter of understanding that granted TAs a 50\% rebate off any tuition increases. Since the New Democratic Party government froze tuition, there were no monies paid out by the University under this Letter of Agreement. As such, in the eyes of labour relations, the letter was never actually “activated.” After the freeze, tuition at UBC rose dramatically in 2002, 2003, 2004 virtually doubling the cost of tuition.

The context of this ruling is important because of the ways in which the University repeatedly tried to undermine the effectiveness of the workers’ strike actions. The leadership of the TA union initiated a climate that focused on membership participation ad adopted the slogan “this room decides”\textsuperscript{92}. At the outset of the strike, the UBC management argued to the Labour Relations Board that the Union was trespassing on private property in an attempt to keep rotating strikes off


the campus perimeter. When the Labour Board decided that it could not rule on trespassing, the case went to the Supreme Court where it was ruled that that the union was could picket but not make noise. During the strike, UBC’s board of governors passed a policy granting a tuition waiver to all the Doctoral students. Many interpreted this move as an attempt to divide the Union in the middle of the strike as it was made up of both PhD and MA students who were attempting to win language on tuition. It was successful for the University because in arbitration it was argued that the Union’s letter was a duplicate of the board of governor’s decision. When president of the Union local Alex Grant stated, “There won’t be a contract without tuition,” he elaborated on how the issue of tuition was at the forefront of this labour dispute.93 After one month of striking, the Gordon Campbell Liberal government ordered the campus unions back to work after passing the “University of British Columbia Services Continuation Act.” The Act imposed a 20-day cooling off period, ordering workers back to work.94 The hammering down of this legislation was initiated by the President of the University in a letter to the Minister of Education.95

The strategy was to make this legislation coincide with the last 20 days of school. Framed as an attempt to crush collective bargaining, CUPE President Barry O’Neill argued that “the government has stepped in, stopped the bargaining process

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95 Appendix 3.
and forced through legislation in ‘Big Brother’ fashion." The enforced cooling-off period made further striking illegal. But this legislation only infuriated the non-TA workers at other University locals, and they joined the pickets. An urgent message also went out to all CUPE BC locals asking if they would support provincial job action called for by the president in support of UBC workers if a contract were to be imposed on the workers." Because of growing public support for their illegal walkout, the campus unions proposed binding arbitration at the end of March and the University accepted. This binding arbitration process, however, did not result in language on tuition. As a PhD zoology student stated to the press, “For other students who might follow us, we would advise against accepting binding arbitration." The leverage of the strike was removed by the cooling-off period and instead of setting precedent on tuition, the arbitrator instead gave language on benefits and a wage increase beyond the PSEC mandate.

In his report, arbitrator Mark Brown heard the varied arguments from both sides. First, CUPE 2278 argued that tuition is a condition of employment in the Union as members are graduate students and university employees. Second, CUPE 2278 argued that other collective agreements at UBC contain tuition waivers but Mark

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Brown disagreed with the comparison between locals. Third, CUPE 2278 argued that other collective agreements in the country at similar union locals have tuition waivers. Then, UBC argued that tuition waivers are part of a financial assistance package offered to students and that tuition is a student issue instead of an employment issue. Mark Brown remarks in his conclusion that the University should cover the expense of waivers as a benefit but more Universities would have to offer a waiver to swing his decision. As he summarizes:

At the end of the day, I conclude from a labour relations perspective in the context of an employer/employee relationship, tuition waiver is a benefit that must be included in the cost of total compensation. If the balance of teaching assistants (those other than PhD’s) were granted full tuition waiver, the cost to UBC would be approximately $3,200 X 1,000 students equalling $3,200,000.00. Local 2278 argues that tuition waivers and other forms of tuition benefit can be found at five universities in Canada. I conclude that the vast majority of post-secondary institutions do not offer tuition waiver. For those that do, the financial benefit is minimal. Therefore I reject Local 2278’s proposal.99

Brown’s ruling argues that very few universities have language on tuition. As I have shown earlier, as of the spring of 2007, almost all unions have attempted to negotiate tuition language into their collective agreements and this has been the cause for several strikes across the country. Despite the will of teaching assistants across the country, the Universities are clearly against any form of tuition relief for their graduate student employees.

The LRB decision coordinated the end of the strike for the graduate students at UBC. Although the text intended to provide a response to the situation at UBC, it was extended to graduate students at SFU. This ruling had implications for any attempts the TSSU would try to make on tuition. The document was activated at the bargaining table by the University’s chief negotiator, and again by a mediator in our group mediation process with other university locals at the LRB. Therefore, universities across the province and the labour board use this decision to retain authority on the issue of tuition. In using a decision on tuition about graduate student workers at UBC, it becomes clear how this text operates across different contexts and spaces (temporal and geographical) to coordinate different groups of graduate students.

The Human Resources administrators at SFU activated the LRB decision whenever any discussion on tuition arose at the bargaining table. The logic is that if a ruling stated one thing for UBC, then it is applicable for all students across the province. The LRB decision became a way for Human Resources at SFU to enforce that a legally government sanctioned decision had already made on this issue. Here, it should be noted that the text enters into the course of action when the University a contentious issue arises that has been successfully used to mobilize previously. This activation is an attempt by the University to halt any form of organizing on tuition.
The Union also activates the same text as the University. A conversation at a general membership meeting on 28 March 2006 reflects on how this information is passed down by those who were in the most contact with the University:

Communications student: On the tuition waivers, does it sound like a lost deal? If we went out on strike, we wouldn’t get it or do we just need to put more pressure?

Bargaining Team member: We’ve been told it’s a lost deal. There’s been arbitration come down showing that. We’ve shown them a number of arguments. It doesn’t mean we’ve given up, but it’s something we should talk about.

Bargaining Team member: The first thing they did is throw down the arbitration case from UBC last time.\textsuperscript{100}

This text enters into the coordination of action by the bargaining team when listed to the general membership as a reason for why we cannot get language on tuition. As a result, we can see how the text activated by Human Resources also coordinated the actions of the bargaining team. In the local setting, it acts as a way to coordinate the general membership. Instead of seeing that document as rich potential for struggle and resistance, I believe the Union leadership (which includes my own actions) activates the text as a way to explain the university’s position while also preparing the general members for a defeat on the issue.

\textsuperscript{100} Teaching Support Staff Union. \textit{General Membership Meeting}, March 28, 2006.
If one looks further into how the LRB itself is coordinated, it becomes quite clear that the government in power is very active in controlling the Board. The clear rejection of a tuition rebate by the University does not allow the Union to break down the relationships between the University, PSEC, and the Labour Relations Board to its members. Further, when the Union also activates the text, it enforces those systems of ruling, which are not in the best interest of workers. By constantly referring to the Labour Relations Board document as an outside decision on tuition, the University removes the experience of graduate students and reifies the institutions and their relations of ruling. These ruling relations in turn work to support each other, using the threat of force to overwhelm and oppress.

Based on the fact that an appeal process exists at the LRB, the Union can assume that other people have experienced decisions being overturned and that the use of this text is just one of the many strategies employed by the university. Therefore, this text does not actually have final say in terms of the possibilities of struggle and resistance around the issue of tuition. However, in understanding how it is utilized in the bargaining process, students can mobilize around the labour relations board’s application of the document well ahead of time.

The activated LRB text on tuition in the context of bargaining at SFU coordinates a history of repression instead of an account of resistance to the BC Liberals and graduate student struggles against tuition. The text coordinates a history
of institutional régimes that are set up to support each other and maintain an interest in exploiting workers. If Union members see texts as a way of coordinating action or inaction on a specific topic, and contextualize the text to the membership, the Union will be far better off in deciding whether or not to allow these texts to influence decision making.

PSEC Negotiating Framework

At the bargaining table, management repeatedly stated to the TSSU that the Public Sector Employers’ Council (PSEC) is the body that makes decisions about monetary increases. PSEC, an arm of the BC government, allegedly “coordinates the management of labour relations policies and practices in the public sector to foster an efficient and effective workforce.” The Council sets and monitors bargaining mandates such as permitted wage increases across the province for public sector workers. New Democratic Premier Mike Harcourt established a commission of inquiry into the entire Public Service and Public Sector in 1992 in order to propose a new framework for human resources management in the province for public sector workers. Specifically, this included an in-depth look at six sectors of provincial workers: health, community and social services, education (kindergarten to grade 12), colleges and institutes, universities, crown corporations, and municipalities. This

restructuring allowed for the creation of institutions that could enforce wage
restraints in the public sector while allowing for employment security for public
sector workers.103

Accordingly, the Public Sector Employers Act of 1993 solidified Commissioner
Judy Korbin's recommendations for the public sector, bringing forward a massive
reorganization of the public sector.104 The Act established two levels of provincial
coordination: the Public Sector Employers' Associations' (PSEA) and the Public Sector
Employers' Council (PSEC). Under the Act, an employers' association (a management
group in a specific public sector) was established for each of the six sectors.105 The
employer's association for the university sector is the University Public Sector
Employer's Council (UPSEA), which includes all university presidents.106 The
structure of PSEC means that a university president has input on what the wage
mandate for university employees will be. The actual involvement of a University
president at this level is unknown.

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103 Ibid., 61.
105 Government, Public Sector.
106 The University Presidents' Council, “University Public Sector Employers' Association”
Co-chaired by the Minister of Finance, PSEC's 15-member council includes eight Deputy Ministers of the BC Government, six public sector employer association representatives, and the Commissioner of the public service. PSEC is also composed of a Secretariat, which reviews all newly negotiated collective agreements to ensure that they are within the yearly bargaining mandate approved by PSEC.

Though the NDP claims to have set up PSEC with good intentions, the Council can easily accommodate a fiscally conservative agenda. Since PSEC's inception, each of the five union locals at SFU have received the mandate increase set by the body on a nearly identical basis. This means that Unions have been unable to
participate in a meaningful negotiation process and that the government is benefiting from this process more than workers are. Further, PSEC as a decision making body allows the Liberal government to be in a position where they can consistently give a hands-off impression in the bargaining process. Rather, the government decides the terms of the labour negotiations and if they feel it necessary to intervene and restrict labour disruption, they will. In a period where universities are receiving a hands-off message from the government in terms of public funding, they exert much control over the labour negotiation process.

PSEC is not always successful in attempting to control wage increase. Board members at the LRB will make use of the power they have in their positions and will make rulings outside of the wage mandates set by the government. Mark Brown's UBC ruling went beyond the mandate: "...I am not necessarily bound by PSEC guidelines" he argued, "If it was formally bound by guidelines the purpose of an interest arbitration would be limited."\(^{107}\) Clearly, tension exists at the level of the LRB and PSEC around the autonomy of the LRB's decision-making. As this UBC ruling demonstrates, PSEC mandates are occasionally thrown out in LRB arbitration rulings and in a few cases, unions are awarded higher wages than the PSEC mandates.

If an employer such as the University, decides to go beyond the mandate set by the BC provincial government, the amount of "excess wages" are deducted from

the operating grant received by the provincial government. The previous round of bargaining for the TSSU proved that the University can and will step outside of the provincial mandate, especially when faced with the threat of job action. In April 1999, the Union explained to members that despite the fact that the University said they would adhere to the PSEC mandate, when the threat of job action was large enough, the University made concessions.\textsuperscript{108} PSEC has also made concessions and special recommendations for groups that it deems as deserving to be outside of the negotiating framework. Therefore, despite the provincial wage mandates, with enough pressure, PSEC guidelines could be increased in a union's favour.

A leaked document titled, "2006 Negotiating Framework: Strategic Triangulation and Policy Tables," was released to public sector employers' associations as a draft confidential document on 19 December 2005.\textsuperscript{109} It is unknown how this document got into the hands of unions in BC. It shows directly how much jurisdiction PSEC has over the negotiation process. The PSEC document circulated amongst the union staff and leadership in BC. The text is a rulebook for human resource departments across the public sector for coordination and control over the bargaining process. The PSEC document was intended solely for Human Resources departments'.

\textsuperscript{108} TeachingSupport Staff Union. \textit{TSSU Bargaining Bulletin #7}, April 1999.
This text intends to manage and regulate the local settings of bargaining by employers. Overall, the text coordinates the activities of human resources departments while giving them the appearance of autonomy. This document shows that the more involved PSEC is in the process, the less this process resembles collective bargaining. In bargaining, the University management defers all monetary and non-monetary issues to PSEC. Indeed, PSEC remains referenced so often that many locals saw the bargaining process as excluding the University. As a CUPE 4163 member at the University of Victoria stated, "...with the University out of the picture, it is now clear that this is really a struggle with the Provincial Government."\(1^{10}\) This dynamic between PSEC and the University is apparent through this text.

Never mentioned directly at the bargaining table, the text was a guideline followed by the management and public sector administrators as a whole. A few points and diagrams in this document are worth highlighting. Twice in the document, the same figure appears to emphasize the six steps in which employers associations must undertake. The diagram emphasizes the importance of the employer following each step in order. As PSEC's diagram illustrates, the "service delivery agents", also known as the University, develops a bargaining plan with the PSEC Secretariat. This plan was to happen before bargaining begins. The PSEC Secretariat reviews the plan

and forwards it to the Minister for approval. Therefore, when the University comes to
the table with an offer, the Ministry has already approved it. If there are any changes
from the initial approved plan, the University must gain approval by the Minister of
Finance who approves all final offers. As they explain, "approval must be obtained for
all elements of the Negotiating Framework, including proposals for general wage
increases, incentives, dividends, compensation trade-offs, market adjustment,
productivity, policy content, etc." The employers then do not really "lead
negotiations," considering these strict conditions. Further, the text states that
collective bargaining outcomes must support the government's "strategic direction." With a Liberal government keen to follow the trends of privatization and
deregulation, this is a not a labour-friendly direction.

Interestingly, the document also informs managers about how to use money
innovatively. PSEC explains: "Where employers are able to negotiate demonstrable
cost savings within their total compensation envelope, they may reallocate those
savings to another part of the total compensation envelope." Therefore, the
University could have reallocated the pool of signing bonus money towards language
tuition. Overall, this PSEC text demonstrates how the University is enabled by the

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111 Public Sector Employers Council, 2006 Negotiating, 2.
112 Ibid., 3.
113 Ibid., 4.
provincial government to deflect their responsibility from the process and claim that all power lies in the hands of PSEC when it is most convenient for the University.

As a result, the text then coordinates the HR departments and does not allow much concession for local issues, especially language issues that could cost the university money. As comments echoed by a union leader earlier demonstrate, the PSEC document allows the Union to understand the process as being rooted in the province. Therefore, this text guides the actions of the human resources department and the Union leadership, playing an important part in defining the trajectory of action.

This text clarified one part of my own experiences in bargaining. There was a period where the University was essentially cancelling sessions and not moving on anything for the graduate student employee table. It is now obvious that this delay was precisely because the University was awaiting a new announcement on wage mandates from PSEC. The University's refusal to move on any issues after a strong strike vote managed to infuriate the bargaining team who did not understand why the University was stalling the process. Because of this document, it is now clear that the University did not have the ability to put forward an offer until it was supported by PSEC.

This text also confirms that the TSSU must have been doing something right because there was intervention by the Minister of Labour, which does not appear as
part of the regular PSEC process. After our strike vote and following PSEC's announcement, there must have had a discussion with the University about our local. A call from the Deputy Minister of Labour about entering into a mediation process with Judy Korbin serves as an indication that additional involvement was required to move the process along. The TSSU decided to leave this mediation process to join all other university unions at the Labour Relations Board because CUPE initiated the University Coordinated Bargaining Committee (UCBC). CUPE's response to PSEC's announcement of longer agreement's and signing bonuses was to ensure that all unions stayed at the LRB until all contracts were negotiated. In looking at the text in comparison to the actions taken by the Ministry, we see how the government is willing to alter its strategy and intervene in order to have unions conform to the standard negotiation process.

Both the LRB and PSEC texts show how very specific aspects of bargaining are coordinated. While the first document is utilized as a way to halt discussion, the second document serves to further highlight the relationship between the University and the provincial government and specifically both texts coordinate the actions of the Human Resources department at SFU. Further, the documents are both re-activated by the Union when explicating the contexts under which we are bargaining.
CHAPTER 4: TOWARDS MORE EFFECTIVE ORGANIZING: MAPPING THE SOCIAL RELATIONS OF STRUGGLE

The idea of mapping the social relations of struggle begins with the premise that activists are already researching and analyzing the situations they face. This method takes IE one-step further to move beyond simply viewing ruling relationships, to also analyzing our capacities as activists. The practice of mapping is not meant to be an activity that happens by trained researchers but is a tool to be used by activist groups. As Gary Kinsman explains,

Political activist mappings of the social relations of struggle are not the same as critically investigating the set of ruling relationships that oppressed people confront, which institutional ethnography more typically focuses on. It is instead a mapping of the social struggles themselves, a relational sketch of the conflicts between ruling relations and social movements.\textsuperscript{114}

While keeping central the idea that activists must understand what they are up against, mapping the social relations of struggle moves away from solely examining ruling relations to visualizing how we can organize against oppressive forces. This also allows activists to learn from the relationships they have already been built and to conceptualize how to expand their list of allies. It allows activists to evaluate

\textsuperscript{114} Kinsman, \textit{Mapping Social}, 141.
capacities in the face of forces of ruling while gaining further understanding of how to organize against them. Drawing from PAE, the mapping also asks us to consider how groups discuss ruling relations and calls for a move beyond speculation. Therefore, the objective of this exercise is to take the knowledge gained about the social organization of texts and apply it to the mapping exercise. In turn, this will help to clarify union activism. This discussion offers a starting point to look at how the social relations of union struggles are organized in the province of BC and for the local issue of tuition rebates for teaching assistants.
This mapping starts with the specific issue of teaching assistants and tuition as its centre point. In this mapping exercise, the campaign or specific goal, which has both a past and present character, is a tuition rebate through the collective agreement. The "rupture in experience" felt by some graduate students is presented as the wavy line. The ideology put forward by the university is "ruptured" when graduate students know a situation to be outside everyday experiences. For graduate students, this disjuncture happens when they become aware that other graduate students across the country have tuition relief, when the University tells the Union at the bargaining table tuition relief will not be possible. As George Smith explains, "These kinds of problems of knowing of being told one thing but in fact knowing otherwise on the basis of personal experience- provided a starting point for the research that then went on to explicate how a regime works".  

This line of fault based in experience separates workers from the objective, the bureaucratic institutions of ruling.

As my map indicates, the experience of these two texts are socially organized and connected to a broader set of social relations but are mobilized through the Ministry of Labour and PSEC. For example, the Labour Relations Board and the Code that governs it, tie together the police, the courts, the criminal justice system, the work of lawyers and social organization of the law, which is also connected to another broader set of state relations not on this map. Further, other bodies influence

\[115\] Smith, \textit{Political Activist}, 57.
the Liberal majority in the legislative assembly including right wing think tanks like the Fraser Institute and business councils. What we learn from the mapping is how these institutions of ruling overlap and because of their coordination act as a strong force against unions and grassroots organizing.

It also becomes apparent that there are several institutions of ruling, which the Union could target more effectively. For example, the Union could apply different forms of pressure to the Human Resources department and the Ministry of Finance as well as elected provincial government officials. Because PSEC and the LRB are so interdependent on the governments of the day, they should be directly confronted for their policies that affect workers salaries and threaten the ability of workers to organize.

In this graph, I have placed the TSSU at the centre of the social movement section. However, there are several smaller divisions under the category of the Union. The bargaining team had the most encounters with University managers, while the Executive Committee and the Job Action Committee also played a strong role in decision-making and developing campaigns. Some members of the bargaining team had a good sense of how areas of bargaining were coordinated, while most of the general members did not. Information about the Union and bargaining should be distributed to members outside of a general membership meeting format. Often meeting structures do not necessarily draw out many members. Our contact with the
majority of our members happens in the form of texts, often through emails, posters and newsletters. It is important this form of communicating with members is only one tactic for expanding membership involvement. Reaching out to membership will involved a rethinking of how graduate students are already organized within their departments. For example, in certain departments students meet regularly in study groups, or work very closely in labs. International students also form community on campus in ways that greatly differ from “domestic” students. Union members have the potential to be the strongest organized group in support of campaign on tuition. This mapping points out that the Union needs to strategize on how to develop further involvement.

Several unions and organizations were supportive of the TSSU in this process. In looking at this map, I am conscious that those who were at the bargaining table and in the long mediation process who had other connections in the union movement were probably most aware of that support, based on the relationships built out of coordinated bargaining. Despite being told about acts of solidarity, the general members may not have been conscious of this. We need to find a way to make this form of solidarity relevant to members beyond a long list of letters, which most members will never see. In the next process, it would be advantageous to have more coalition building and public events where other unions and community organizations could offer their support, stories of victory, and mentorship. If Unions
are interested in working with community groups and the global justice movement, they must attempt to be relevant to these organizations while respecting their process.

I have placed CUPE as straddling both the side of allies and ruling relations because of the current model of business unionism that exists in this national union. These structures are often formally democratic but in practice exclusionary and not very responsive to the rank and file initiatives.116 Melissa Moroz wrote specifically about her experiences with CUPE 4163 at the University of Victoria, explaining how a policy of strike aversion by CUPE played out at the local level.

A TA strike would deplete CUPE’s fragile strike fund, threatening the well-being of many of the union’s half-a-million members. A strike, however, appeared necessary to safeguard the economic interests of UVic TAs. Ultimately, a policy of strike aversion influenced the union’s demands and its approach to bargaining with the employer. Seeking to avert a strike, CUPE adopted a stance of accommodation rather than resistance. Leaders and staff were generally guided by an implicit strategy of preventing the bargaining process from building momentum and shifting into something with a life of its own, beyond the control of the organization.117

This critique is important because it serves to demonstrate how and why large unions can make decisions that are not always in the best interest of their members. In my own observations, locals with militant rank and file involvement built through

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117 Moroz, Teaching Assistants, 18.
ongoing actions do not need to rely on the provincial or national offices of CUPE, which allows them more autonomy to pursue their campaigns. I have also included the NDP on the same line as CUPE because many of the same critiques that can be levelled at the model of business unionism are also applicable to institutionalized left political parties. For example, PSEC was created by the NDP government.

The practice of mapping allows the larger picture to become clearer. It demonstrates with whom we are struggling and who are allies are in this process. Overall, this allows for further action in terms of solidarity with our supporters and confrontation with ruling relations.
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The Teaching Support Staff Union's attempt to secure tuition rebates and an exploration of the documents and institutions that played a role in the bargaining process opens up many opportunities for future union activism. How can the TSSU win tuition rebates? I will focus on three areas, which can act as starting points. The dissemination of pre-existing knowledge within the Union for workshops and the development of research based on people's everyday experiences to use as mobilizing tactic. There is a need to situate public sector bargaining in a broader social and political context while prioritizing ongoing confrontation with the ruling relations that are intrinsic to bargaining. I will also end with a discussion of overall changes to the Union structure because I believe that problems in the current climate of Union are linked to a business-union model, which often impedes mobilizing.

Disseminate Knowledge

In the process of mapping, it becomes clear that some Union members have more knowledge than others around the role of the institutional relations and bargaining. This is based on one's position in the Union. As a result, there is a need to provide general members with information about how these ruling relations work as a starting point to creating investment in the bargaining process. Mobilizing tools such
as workshops and pamphlets could be created based on what many union leaders already know about their day-to-day interactions with the University. This information could be passed on to members in a variety of formats that would also allow for discussion. This would alleviate some of the ways in which the secrecy of information can create a hierarchy based on privilege and entrenched power dynamics. The dissemination of knowledge can be used as one tactic within the Union to work towards a more democratic process.

In order for the relationship between tuition, PSEC, LRB and the University to be clear to members, there is a need for open communication and critical analysis by BC unions about the bodies and how they function. For example, several Unions across the province received the “2006 Negotiating Framework Employer’s Guide” from an unknown source. This document negotiates the University’s relationship to the province in bargaining and informs actions at the bargaining table. Since this document was distributed through the higher ranks of union leadership, the material’s effectiveness as a mobilizing tool to demonstrate the province’s overshadowing in bargaining was never experienced. In the future, CUPE BC should take the lead on leaked government documents and make them public in order to allow members to further understand how the process of public sector bargaining is tied to forms of government control.
There is also much research needed on PSEC. It would be useful for union members to know which union locals in the public sector are able to supersede the PSEC mandates. Historical research on the wage increases of unions who do strike and who do end up receiving beyond their initial PSEC offers could be a useful tool in bargaining. In the last round of bargaining, signing bonuses were integral to the effectiveness of PSEC's package and acted as a powerful way to halt conversation on the overall government offers. A signing bonus for cash-strapped students was more than enough to cover the cost of tuition for that semester. If signing bonuses are to become a regular occurrence in the public sector, unions need to provide their members with a thorough analysis of the difference between entrenched rights through language and buy-offs that do not allow the further strengthening of the collective agreement. This involves a discussion between the differences of up-front benefits versus long-term benefits. For example, surveying what graduate student employees thought of the bonus in relation to their day-to-day work and to the collective agreement would be valuable information to have about the relevance of the bonus in the everyday lives of union members. Also, it is necessary to perform additional research on labour board decisions regarding tuition across Canada. Examples of overturned rulings would allow the union to understand the prospect of such decisions. Union or academic research on PSEC will act as an educational resource for public sector union members because it will allow members to further
understand provincial bargaining beyond the current round and to see these ruling relations as oppressive and linked forces.

Therefore, if knowledge is to be used as a form of power for union members a process of transparency is key. Union leadership must let go of the institutionalized power and hierarchy that have traditionally been part of their positions in order to disseminate knowledge that addresses how ruling relations function.

**Emphasize the Broader Context**

The TSSU's bargaining with the University is based on a set of relationships with other forms of institutional ruling, most notably the PSEC and the LRB. The ways in which these institutions function vary depending on interactions between people in particular places and moments. Despite the Union's many well-planned and thorough arguments on tuition, the texts that I have explored are hard to transcend. In order for the union to reject the texts activated by University administration, the context in which these texts are drafted needs to be further disrupted and connections between the LRB, PSEC and elected representatives needs to be interrogated. Further, unions need to incorporate an analysis of the ways in which institutional relations maintain control over the lives of workers. Overall, this analysis involves the development of long-term strategy and goals.
If we look more closely at the UBC strike, one sees that teaching assistants faced restrictive conditions under a Liberal government and a university president bent on breaking the strike. Graduate students employees at UBC were legislated into a cooling off period in their most effective striking period: the last few weeks of school. The circumstances, where these workers were brought into binding arbitration on the question of tuition, did not support the rights of free collective bargaining. Most recently, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that the same BC Liberals violated the rights of workers to bargain collectively under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in sections of a bill used against health care workers.\textsuperscript{118} Essentially, CUPE 2278's ability to be fully effective on tuition was cut short by the specific nature of social relations made up by the actions of specific people and the ruling relations at that time. Understanding that this context played a role in the arbitration and then in the decisions made in the LRB text allows for a deeper insight into the activation of texts. Providing this context can effectively break down the ways in which the University activates the LRB decision, in order to ultimately view it as surmountable.

The TSSU did make critical connections between the majority government, PSEC and the LRB at TSSU meetings to members. However, it is not enough to draw out these connections in a setting where those presenting the materials have the most knowledge about the process and are at the bargaining table. As I have demonstrated, union leadership can follow the same pattern as management: activating texts in order to report what happens in bargaining. This upholds those institutions of ruling due to the hierarchy and knowledge held by the bargaining team. The discussion around the implicit power of the government to regulate the lives of workers must also happen outside of meeting settings and be part of the Union’s ongoing analysis. A key aspect to moving beyond the texts is to situate them in ruling relations and to begin to challenge the stability of these institutions.

From the start of bargaining, the Union should explicitly state to the members what would be required within the confines of the current labour relations paradigm to receive language on tuition. As past precedent demonstrates, no amount of good arguing is going to get us language on tuition at this point. It should be overtly stated that the LRB process is not a likely one to get teaching assistants language on tuition. A possible strategy to achieve our goal might be to work towards having multiple graduate student employee unions across the province on strike together.

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119 Teaching Support Staff Union. Ratification Special General Meeting, April 3, 2006.
Bodies of ruling such as the LRB and PSEC are presented in bargaining as institutional entities. Instead, I posit they are composed of individuals and social relations. The presentation and upholding of institutional bodies provides the University with a reified, essentializing argument. The lack of context and therefore the lack of embodied experiences of graduate student workers mediated and organized the work of the LRB and PSEC documents. Bargaining issues that came closer to causing a strike led to an increase in textual formality and further removal of graduate student voices. The Union could put together material (audio or video) which captures the experiences of graduate students in relation to their work as a way to keep demands entrenched. Teaching Assistants also know much about the way the University operates based on their employment. The more participation the Union has from its members, the more likely the experiences of graduate student workers are to be reaffirmed in the process of bargaining. Further, as Clarice Kuhling from CUPE 3903 further explicates: "Ultimately, strong links to the members prevent ratcheting down demands." The ability for everyday experiences to be central to our organizing not only strengthens the Union but also moves away from the reification of institutions.

The explanation of how specific institutional coordination act as oppressive forces in bargaining further explicates the broader context. In breaking down

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in institutional coordination, a systemic process of bargaining and economic injustices becomes clearer.

**Unions as a Force against Ruling Relations**

In the process of my mapping, it is clear that unions need to be more confrontational with the institutions of ruling that make up the bargaining process in BC. The "2006 Negotiating Framework Employer's Guide" reveals that the initial wage increases are decided upon by PSEC and the University, and then managers must then further negotiate what they think their employees deserve after Unions have been present with an offer. Therefore, the creation of a culture of ongoing mobilization in the Union will allow the TSSU to be more powerful from the start, instead of reacting to the process of bargaining. This position needs to be integral to any strategy that will successfully improve the lives of workers and challenge capitalist ruling relations. Coming into the bargaining process with a membership who is ready to strike and who understands what they are up against will greatly affect how the University presents its initial position to PSEC.

Union members should also begin to apply pressure to individual PSEC members, and to University managers who are involved in the bargaining process. This involves a rethinking of the paradigms of what constitutes political action within union activity. PSEC government representatives determine what constitutes a fair wage increase and benefits package for workers and therefore should be held
accountable to these decisions. Part of PSEC’s approach is that it acts as a body that is hidden from public scrutiny. In effect, public sector unions should put ongoing pressure onto this council so they are held responsible.

The public should hold government bodies and their representatives accountable for their actions as part of a democratic process. I am not suggesting however, that unions concentrate their energy on lobbying or electoral change. A post-mortem of a decade of the New Democratic Party reign in British Columbia summarizes the need “for changes in both political agency and systemic structure.”\(^{121}\) Instead, the current focus should be on the democratization of internal processes in order to build worker-centred power building on struggles in the workplace. Indeed, focusing on worker-centred power is far more sustainable in a challenge to capital than focusing on who is at the LRB. The long-term benefits of committing to a form of unionism that attempts to mobilize towards social change will have ripple effects throughout society. Ultimately, one must believe in the power of organizing that allows people to coordinate autonomously outside of institutional structures while learning to build a sustained fight against them.

In summary, it is necessary to have ongoing collective actions targeting institutions such as PSEC in the lead up to bargaining. If similar conditions are put

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upon the public sector in the next round of bargaining, unions are able to stand up for the overall right to free collective bargaining.

Union Organizing

While reflecting on my experience with the coordination of texts and the act of mapping, it is clear that discussions around strategy need to occur in conjunction with future discussions of TSSU and public sector union organizing in BC. In pointing out areas for further organizing, the current structure of the TSSU does not allow for innovative forms of organizing with the goal of achieving movement on tuition. In my TSSU experience, often when an organizing idea surfaces, such as the desire to unionize research assistants, the structure cannot support it. Our current model does not even allow those students active in the Union to have large-scale discussions on strategy because the positions in the paid leadership require more administrative work than organizing duties. The very nature of an organization and an environment where mobilizing is extremely contradictory and difficult, is not effective. This problem is not inherent to the TSSU. Therefore, how can we begin to organize beyond the current confines of union structures?

Several unions across North America (much larger than the TSSU) have started discussions about transforming their internal self-governance and democratic
process. This dialogue stems from the disconcerting decrease in the number of unionized workers primarily in the United States, as well as the ongoing efforts to remain relevant to their members instead of constantly trying to catch up to them. According to Charlotte Yates’s study of unions in BC and Ontario, the faces of unions are changing and unions have been unsuccessful at keeping up with the growing racial and gender diversity of the workforce. These dilemmas for the union movement as a whole are reflected in unions such as UNITE HERE, who have been especially proficient at connecting newly organized women into union involvement by mentoring them to become leaders in their own workplaces. These changes have mostly focused on fostering community among the most marginalized workers, primarily women and people of colour into leadership positions. Although these are necessary moves, they do not address the overall structural changes required for unions to remain significant to their members.

Most unions across North America have continued to operate under a business model, which sees members as passive instead of active, and research shows that even if unions are trying to change, they are having difficulty. As the decline in the

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124 Yates, Expanding Labour’s, 111.

number of unionized workers in the U.S. demonstrates, this model is not sustainable. The union structure that is heavily reliant upon a white, male personality-based leadership has interests, which greatly differ from the workers they are leading. These leaders must attempt to maintain not only the structure itself but their paid positions, while often having the final say on what forms of action are taken and when. To counter this, unions must begin by organizing from the experience of the workers who are most marginalized, and having them lead a project of union renewal. Therefore, the discussion on union structure is much larger than one for specifically the teaching assistant union or even for public sector unions, but applies to how large labour organizations in Canada will refraime their strategies for the collective interest of working people.

Beyond the necessary structural changes, the changing environment of public sector bargaining at this moment opens up the possibility for exciting organizing in both the areas of tuition and public sector bargaining. For students who are workers, the larger questions around mobilization are still very much informed by the possibilities around issues that affect their everyday experiences as workers, such as tuition.

The Union's organizing is something over which a Union has complete control. Elaine Bernard has pointed out a key way to begin discussions on strategy is by focussing on the importance of struggle as a way to build a strong union foundation. Several issues were not resolved through the bargaining process and could still be worked on outside of the bargaining cycle. These campaigns offer a rich starting point for beginning to strategize around inclusive and diverse forms of organizing on campus with large-scale campaigns with attainable goals. For example, an end to the exploitation of teaching labour in the Language Training Institute, the unionization of Research Assistants on campus, the unionization of the instructors of the new private college at SFU. In terms of building a worker-centred identity, first the Union should encourage graduate students to identify as workers. This can occur by furthering our grievance processes alongside teaching assistants, which will affect the workers' day-to-day experiences. The Union could also take on a massive campaign pressing workers to log our hours. This could lead to a work to rule campaign especially around marking time.

If the Union is to take up the issue of tuition there are many large internal campaigns that the TSSU could pursue. In order to build up actions on tuition, unions on campus need to launch campaigns about wage cuts every time tuition increases. If

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we are serious about working towards having universities cover tuition, and not at the expense of undergraduate fee increases, the TSSU also needs to get SFU administrators to start strategically thinking about how they allocate their money. For example, if PSEC did not want tuition to be included in collective agreements, but the University was amendable to the idea, administrators would have to think it was an issue important enough to do a strategic realignment of finances. The money must come from the government through a redistribution of wealth, progressive taxation and an ideological shift in the ways in which government thinks of education. This involves instilling values into the process of achieving our goals, so that free tuition does not come at the expense of others.

If we are to win tuition rebates, these texts demonstrate that it is of utmost importance for the TSSU to have a clear plan that goes beyond a model of providing services for members and incorporates the rich experiences that can be gained from struggle into a strategy. In my opinion, the most pressing aspect of our organizing should be to work towards a democratic decision making process so that members can be involved in strategizing. This could start with bi-monthly departmental meetings with union members. As the authors of *Rebuilding Labour* state, “Democracy exists when workers, rather than paid staff, set union priorities.”¹²⁸ This means members must reject the easily internalized hierarchical process that goes along with a business

union model. If union members are to fight for the benefit and liberation of all workers, they must also understand how that model fits into the capitalist relations.

This thesis allows for a better understanding of the coordination ruling around tuition in the context of university and provincial bargaining. It allows the TSSU to see how texts and then their presentation are coordinated in the Union and University settings, and clarifies other areas for future organizing. This thesis is only a beginning to the research needed on tuition rebates, but I ultimately hope it can act as a tool and prompt the start of necessary work within the Teaching Support Staff Union.

The TSSU needs to continue to organize and pave the way for teaching assistants to be leaders on the issue of accessible education and tuition. It is my hope that the Union will engage in ongoing mobilizing beyond the idea of a single campaign, or a strike because the ultimate goal is a space for all union members to find the relevance of struggle in an ongoing way.
Administration's salary is skyrocketing!

So is your tuition. Demand a tuition waiver.

TSSU

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JUST SAY NO!
THANKFULLY IT'S NOT TOO LATE. We can still get a better deal than this, even a tuition waiver of a modest percentage (rather than a set miniscule cash amount) would at least keep pace with increasing tuition. In the proposed agreement, as tuition climbs higher, that 40 bucks will seem more and more pathetic. So now is our chance to reject this arrangement and seek a solution that will result in a real degree of protection.

quality vs. quantity

The lack of a cap on tutorial sizes is another reason to reject the tentative agreement. In place of a cap we have an automatic workload review for large tutorials. Although the average tutorial at SFU in 1999/2000 was between 14 and 16 students, the average size of tutorials has been rising for three years and TAs do teach tutorials that are as large as 60 students, while tutorials for Sessional Instructors have been as high as 170 students. Although a workload review will help prevent members being forced to overwork, it does nothing to address the quality of teaching.

impartial third party?

Some of the gains made around equivalents have merit, in particular the notification requirements and the access to an appeal process. TSSU now will have access to information previously unavailable and will be more involved in the creation of equitable equivalents. However, the provisions for disputes to quickly lead to arbitration has been removed in favour of an appeal process whose last resort decision-maker is a University Director who ultimately reports to the Associate VP Academic. In addition, the new Joint Equivalents Review Committee’s mandate is restricted to the review of equivalents in five departments—when there may well be others which need review—and again, if consensus cannot be reached among Union and University committee members, final decisions rest with this “third-party” University Administrator. It is unclear how much more effective the appeal process and the JERC will be than our regular grievance procedures.

what next?

If the membership votes against the tentative agreement then bargaining will resume. It is likely that we will need a new contract committee. If so, the authors of this leaflet will volunteer to be part of that new bargaining committee. We believe that the gains that were made in bargaining so far were due to the one-day strike preparations. If we return to bargaining, we can improve the tentative deal through job action. We will need to have a special general membership meeting to determine the form of the job action.

In the fight to protect ourselves from a pay cut due to tuition increases, we have many allies. The other support staff on campus in CUPE 3338 will respect any picket lines we put up. We have official support from the student society. Students are already organizing on this campus and other campuses across the province to oppose the tuition fee increases. There is ongoing opposition to many of the cuts from the provincial government. As a part of that opposition we can take on the university administration and win!

To contact the authors of this bulletin email: <voteno2002@hotmail.com>

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