

## **Narrative History to 1985**

The Association of the Academic Staff of the University of Alberta originated with the Faculty Relations Committee, a body established during the 1930's by University President Dr. W. A. R. Kerr, to serve as a liaison committee between the Administration and the academic staff. Records dealing with the inception of the Faculty Relations Committee are unfortunately vague. The first recorded minutes referring to the Committee occur in the minutes of the General Faculties Council meeting of November 27, 1939, in which President Kerr is reported as stating that he named the Committee with the approval of the General Faculties Council three years ago.

However, no record of any such endorsement can be found, although Dr. Kerr's own correspondence reports that in July, 1937, he appointed six members of the University faculty to constitute a committee for the 1937-38 session for consultation with the President regarding matters relating to the academic staff. The first official meeting of the Faculty Relations Committee, with recorded minutes, appears not to have occurred until March 15, 1939, when the Committee met under the chairmanship of Dr. A. W. Downs, as appointed by Dr. Kerr.

During its initial meetings, the Committee dealt with the question of Provincial Government trade claim vouchers, referred to it by the General Faculties Council. In November of 1939, based on its own recommendations made to the President, the Committee was reorganized according to a more democratic system of selection and was consequently more adequately able to deal with problems concerning the academic staff in general, particularly in the matter of the restoration of salary cuts that had been made during the Depression.

Before the outbreak of World War II, the Association of the Teaching Staff of the University of Alberta (A.T.S.U.A.) was formed as a supplement to the Faculty Relations Committee. The aims of the A.T.S.U.A., as outlined in its 1945 Constitution, were to foster academic fraternity among the members of the Association; to protect the independence and freedom of teaching, of thought, and of research within the University; and to promote the interests and economic welfare of the members of the Association.

The Faculty Relations Committee and the A.T.S.U.A. were brought together when the A.T.S.U.A. accepted the Faculty Relations Committee as its executive in 1945. This move did not deprive the Faculty Relations Committee of its independence and autonomy of function, and during this time the Committee continued as the official liaison organization between the Administration and the full-time members of the academic staff (both teaching and non-teaching), as recognized by the Board of Governors and the President.

However, although the A.T.S.U.A. Constitution named the Faculty Relations Committee as responsible to the General Meeting of the A.T.S.U.A., the relationship between the Committee and the Association members was somewhat indirect as the Faculty Relations Committee was still a semi-appointed body. This anomalous situation was only rectified in 1950 with the absorption of the Faculty Relations Committee into the A.T.S.U.A.

Henceforward, the elected executive of the A.T.S.U.A. was recognized as performing the functions of the Faculty Relations Committee, and the Faculty Relations Committee itself was dissolved, as reported by the President to the General Faculties Council on February 26, 1951.

In March of 1959, along with other constitutional amendments, the A.T.S.U.A. changed its name to the Association of the Academic Staff of the University of Alberta (A.A.S.U.A.), so as to make provision for the University's non-teaching academic staff.

The move toward an independent Calgary campus necessitated the distinction between an A.A.S.U.A.E. (Edmonton) and an A.A.S.U.A.C. (Calgary), when the constitution of a semi-independent faculty association in Calgary was approved by the A.A.S.U.A. executive on March 10, 1961. The two associations still remained closely linked and did not make separate representations to the Board of Governors.

It was not until the Universities Act was passed in 1966 that the University of Calgary was given complete autonomy. Calgary's faculty association then became known as The University of Calgary Faculty Association (T.U.C.F.A.), while the Edmonton association went back to being referred to as the A.A.S.U.A.

Another change brought about by the new Universities Act was the organization of a new General Faculties Council, of which more than half of its members were directly elected by faculty members. This development, along with the increased powers allotted to the new Council, brought into serious question the need for an academic staff association, and the role of the A.A.S.U.A. was brought under close scrutiny.

After considerable debate, the Association was able to prove its validity as an important component to the successful operation of the University. In 1971, the Association became registered under the Societies Act of the Province of Alberta, and in 1981, after several years of negotiations, the Association was finally incorporated into the Universities Act, thereby gaining legal recognition as the representative body and exclusive bargaining agent of the academic staff.

Today, the AASUA continues to serve as a bargaining agent for the faculty in matters of personal financial concern, particularly in regard to salaries and pensions; to act on behalf of individual faculty members who feel they have not received just treatment by the Administration; and to serve as a forum for the development and expression of faculty opinion in matters of concern to the University.

**This summary was prepared by the Archives of the University of Alberta, 1985.**