

REPORT OF THE EQUITY COMMITTEE, 2006 – 2007

The Equity Committee has not been terribly active this past year. The Committee (Mark Migotti, Marc Ramsay, Christine Daigle (who was going on leave until January 2007) and me, Karen Houle) had a meeting on May 31st of 2006 to discuss the Committee's mandate and to decide on action items for the year. It was decided to continue to host a panel as part of the CPA meetings at the Learned's, and to conduct the bi-annual Equity survey in the Spring of 2007, adding a qualitative question with respect to how departments might envision how the Equity Committee could better serve them. The wording is as follows: "How might the CPA Equity Committee be of better use to your department? Are there any concerns or issues that you would like to see us address on behalf of the membership?" We also decided that it was important to give departments a head's up about the upcoming survey so that they could organize their statistics during the Fall, when applications for jobs were coming in. This was done, with Louise Morel's help, in October. The survey was sent out on April 17th rather than early in the month as it should have been. The 10-day turnaround time (tight time frame needed to collate the data in time for these meetings) was not sufficient enough for departments and I have extended the deadline and will have the results collated and circulated by the end of June.

1. CPA PANEL

The panel topic organized by the Equity Committee is "Collective Responsibility", a very hot topic in ethics these days touching upon globalism, statelessness, evil, innocent complicity (bystanders), and institutional culpability where we can locate the moral and political questions of equity and restitution. The panel was organized chiefly by Stephanie Zubcic-Stacey (PhD candidate at U of G) and myself. It is jointly sponsored by CSWIP. Presenters include Zubcic-Stacey, Houle, Tracy Isaacs (UWO), Todd Calder (University of Wisconsin), Jacquie Davies (Queens), and one of the most prominent moral theorists in Anglo-American thought today, Dr. Claudia Card (University of Wisconsin). A panel on a topic like this does not necessarily correspond closely to our mandate which is to keep an eye on equity in the profession in Canada as well as to promote it. However, just like the previous panels ("Equality, Expression and Human Rights Codes" in 2006, on gay marriage in 2004, on reparation for racial injustice in 2003) three things are being attended to in these panels:

- 1) substantively, these are the political and moral questions underlying equity or touching directly on equity practices;
- 2) good distribution of labour across men and women participants, and in this case, across Continental and Anglo philosophers (though not across Francophone and Anglophone philosophers);
- 3) a joint effort with CSWIP which is nevertheless a part of the CPA program to try to promote maximum attendance.

2. BI-ANNUAL SURVEY

The survey of Philosophy departments in Canada is one important means for following trends and progression of equity. It gives us quantitative data on equity in hiring, promotion, and applicant pools (graduate students as well as CLA's sessionals and tenure-track candidates). This Spring's survey covers the two year period from April 2005 to April 2007. We decided that conducting the survey every two years rather than four would make the compiling of data easier for departments. At our May 2006 meeting we discussed the possibility of conducting a different kind of survey that would serve two additional purposes:

- 1) to keep an eye on issues related to equity as it relates to the experience of people in the profession and
- 2) to possibly generate topics for workshops or panel that are directly related to our current mandate and that are relevant to the experience of people in the profession.

So far, we have been collecting quantitative but not qualitative data on equity. Such a survey would be sent to all members of philosophy departments (rather than just department heads and admins.) and would ask for feedback on equity and their own experience in Canadian academia. This seemed to us to be an important, direct move to give equity concerns a more central place in the discipline. We had concerns, however, about needing ethics boards' approval and also being perhaps not really in any position to respond to, let alone adjudicate on any input we did receive from members. We asked for input from the CPA Executive on this matter, and they were willing to look at a draft of a qualitative survey, but they expressed that this was best handled by the Equity Committee. We would like to have a bit of a discussion about this at the AGM.

3. MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

This year's Equity Committee was chaired by Karen Houle who is finished her second year of her two-year term. Mark Migotti and Marc Ramsay are also finishing out their terms. Christine Daigle renewed for a second two-year term. The student rep, Jenn Epps started her term in January 2006 and will continue on for another term. The Committee needs to rebuild for another 2-year term and we welcome interested CPA / APC members.

4. EQUITY FATIGUE?

It seems that there is very little energy around equity concerns. It gets shuffled to the bottom of the workload (this describes my own efforts as well). It's hard to find the full roster of members for the Committee. I couldn't find a student to do the data work for the survey, even at a decent rate of pay! The most workable part of our mandate (the panel) is indirect and doesn't do much on behalf of most members. More direct intervention or uptake of issues requires expertise and time that the volunteer members simply do not have. The departments frankly aren't thrilled about having to keep stats and report them. I think the work just gets dropped in the laps of the chief admins. The numbers of returns are very low. Only one return said anything in response to the new qualitative question, and it simply was that more time was required to complete the survey. And even looking through this year's statistics compared with last years, it doesn't look like much is changing in terms of the profiles of the departments, especially with First Nations persons and persons with disabilities. Should we just give up on the Equity Committee?

Karen Houle
Chair, Equity Committee