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## How human relations fail to be humane.

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## how human relations fail to be humane

Returning TAs will find that working conditions haven't changed much from last year. New TAs will soon discover the reality beneath the rhetoric of department orientations. For four months now, your Union has been attempting to negotiate an agreement which would better these conditions. So far, we have been unable to move the Administration from its intent to contractualize this status quo by co-opting dissent into management-controlled channels of protest.

To keep you informed of current conditions (all the cases mentioned here occurred in late spring through early fall), we have gathered here the latent indignities, hazings, and atrocities committed against your fellow TAs. (Names and departments are omitted where the TAA is still attempting to grieve the case or where, because we as yet have no contract, there is fear of reprisal.)

1. Seventeen teaching assistants (all members of the TAA in one department) were not reappointed for this year, even though twelve had letters of appointment for a four year period. When the department refused to negotiate the matter, the university-wide TAA bargaining team



demanding to know what work rules had been used in deciding not to reappoint the seventeen. The University's response was that not work rules but "criteria" were used in making the decision. The difference is that the Union can negotiate application of work rules but can't negotiate "criteria." The TAA demand is still on the table.

2. A TAA steward was not reappointed in one department because of his "attitude." He was informed at mid-summer that if his activities as a TAA member embarrassed his department, he would receive no letter of recommendation for a job.

3. TAs in the Social Sciences received letters of appointment specifying one wage figure, only to find out later (some by letter in advance, some upon arrival) that their wage would be \$155 less. The day after the TAA bargaining team brought out this injustice at the bargaining table, the TAs were informed they would receive the original salary.

4. After being promised that teaching assistantships would be available to them, three graduate students changed their summer plans to enroll in school rather than work. During the first week of classes, they were informed that a faculty member needed support for the summer and that their teaching assistantships were going to be used to support him.

5. In one department four teaching assistantship jobs were taken out of the TAA bargaining unit. Without changing the job content, the department simply petitioned the University to change the job title. This, if it stands, puts those job-holders beyond the protection and benefits of our contract.

6. Freshman TAs in one department were informed that people who joined the TAA seldom completed their graduate education. The same department informed its TAs that it would guarantee any benefits secured by the TAA, if only its members would stay out of the unit. (Remember the carrot and stick approach?)

7. Last spring, several TAs and RAs were required by their major professors to sweep and scrub hallway and laboratory floors in preparation for a "distinguished visitor."



8. A woman TA was not reappointed. Her department chairman informed her that males took precedence in appointments and that if she needed support she should get married.
9. A TA who held classes in her apartment one night a week had a "bad" letter placed in her file. Asking for a leave of absence to study abroad for one year, she was informed she would probably not be rehired when she returned because of the "bad" letter.
10. Three alternate TAs were called in for class assignments this fall. When it was learned that a course required for their prelims conflicted with the professor's lectures, they offered to have one of the three attend each lecture and inform the others of what he had said. They were informed, however, that they were not acceptable since attendance at his lecture was mandatory for the job.
11. Several departments continue to require their teaching assistants to take a one-credit course in teaching techniques. This on-the-job training is, of course, without pay. Moreover, the TA must pay tuition for the course which is intended to make him a better TA.
12. A professor had several of his undergraduates doing research papers on the TAA. He even suggested that they contact TAA officers to get briefings on what they were up to. Unfortunately, he didn't inform them that he was a member of the University management bargaining team (Who says that labor spies are a thing of the past?)
13. Numerous TAs who must carry a full teaching load to support themselves suddenly discovered that their progress toward a degree didn't conform to departmental requirements for "being on track," and they found themselves without jobs. Thank the Ford Foundation who now has control over the quantity, intensity, and, therefore, quality of graduate education at Wisconsin.

This brief list is only a selection from only the last few months of injustices by our employers. It doesn't include many minor harassments and the many infringements on TA rights which for one reason or another are never even heard about or reported.

What can be done? The solution is clear: we need a Union grievance procedure.



For three years the TAA has been using its grievance procedure against the University. Even though not officially recognized as the TAs' bargaining agent, this procedure has been successful in 22 out of 23 cases, including such cases as a woman being fired because her chairman "misunderstood" the definition of "student" (we got her her job back, including all back pay); a TA not being rehired because his GPA was calculated from an outdated transcript (we got him his job back); an experienced TA not being rehired because of his refusal to give his "professor's" useless true-false tests (we got him his job back and the professor's distorted letter removed from the secret file kept on the TA).

At the bargaining table the Union has been trying for four months to secure its grievance procedure for TAs. Meanwhile the Union's Grievance Committee is kept busy with new grievances and continues to resolve all kinds of TA problems. The grievance procedure we propose is essentially the same one we have been using. It starts with an informal discussion between the TA and the person most immediately involved in the problem. It then goes on up through the department to the Chancellor until a satisfactory solution is reached.

The University's position is that we want the grievance procedure to cover too wide an area: they don't want it to have anything to do with re-hiring. From the cases listed above, it is obvious that a TA grievance procedure which doesn't protect TAs against current arbitrary re-hiring practices is worthless.

These indignities, hazings, and atrocities are only one area of the insecurity of TAs. The Union is fighting for a grievance procedure to gain security. It will require the active support of all TAs if the Union is to ensure these and other TA rights.

"Is there anything that's weaker than  
the feeble strength of one?"

The Union makes us strong!"