Grad TAs forming union

By GARY BRUELL
Lanier Special Writer

Graduate teaching assistants at Ohio State are organizing a union to fight for higher wages, improved working conditions and more fringe benefits, a union organizer said.

David Looman, assistant to the chairman of the philosophy department, is organizing the Association of Teaching and Research Assistants (ATRA) to unionize academic non-faculty employees of Ohio State.

The idea of unionization grew out of a battle with the Board of Regents over fee waivers for teaching assistants, administrative assistants and research assistants, a pamphlet put out by ATRA explains.

Crisis precedes ATRA

"Spring Quarter developed into a crisis," Looman said. "We recognized that the governing of the University was a matter deeply affecting our lives. We had little or no control so we set up a committee to explore the possibilities of unionism."

ATRA began here last spring when 250 teaching assistants and research assistants voted to create an organization to represent their interests.

According to Looman, ATRA will attempt to create collective bargaining with the administration once formation is complete.

Looman said the major issue is one of wages. "Wages are fantastic low and not enough to live on."

Fringe benefits desired

ATRA members say they want such fringe benefits as a company insurance plan, bookstore discounts and free parking on campus.

Looman said the teaching assistants also want "more office facilities, smaller classes and job security."

ATRA members say they will engage in a campaign to educate the public as to the nature of the University and the role of the teaching assistant.

"We want to make it clear that we are adults, citizens and people who work for a living," Looman said.

Strive for understanding

ATRA will engage in a political and educational campaign for a greater understanding of the University as a whole, Looman explained. Members want to examine the nature of and the management of the educational process itself.

"The majority of decisions determining educational policy are made totally outside our control," Looman added. "It is the conviction of many of us that higher education in America as is currently done is a disaster area. We need new programs, new approaches and new material."

ATRA has about 150 members, headed by temporary, unsalaried officers. The money from dues, $6 a quarter, is being used for printing, publicity and legal expenses, Looman said.

"We will elect officers once our membership exceeds 300. The winning of grievances must wait until we have enough muscle," Looman said.

Seventy persons attended the first ATRA membership meeting of the quarter last week.
TAs, grad researchers ask bookstore discount

The Association of Teaching and Research Assistants (ATRA) request to obtain faculty privileges at the Ohio State bookstore is under consideration, according to Gordon B. Carson, vice president for business and finance.

The administration is working on a budget that would allow for a bookstore discount for teaching assistants, Carson said.

He also said when the budget is completed it has to be approved by the Ohio Legislature.

Faculty privileges at the Ohio State bookstore are a 15 per cent discount on all items and a charge account.

According to David Looman, assistant to the chairman of the philosophy department and chairman of the ATRA negotiation committee, the University employs more than 2,500 teaching and research assistants.

"We are a significant part of the faculty at this university, and we should be entitled to faculty privileges at our University's bookstore," Looman said in his request.

Asked if he expected difficulties, Looman said, "The Administration can't claim they are concerned about undergraduate education without also showing concern and respect for the people who provide that education."

Carson said that he had no idea at this time concerning the discount.

"It may be weeks until the legislature considers our budget proposals," he said.

Area bookshops nix TA discount

By DIANE M. TURCZYK

Off-campus bookstore managers are not making any commitments in extending discount privileges to graduate assistants.

Effective Spring Quarter, graduate assistants will be given a 15 per cent faculty discount at the University Bookstores.

According to Arliss L. Roaden, dean of the Graduate School, approximately 2,500 graduate assistants will be eligible for the discount.

But off-campus bookstore managers are not planning a similar change.

"Until there is a clearer definition of a graduate assistant, and how they will be identified, we will not change our policy," said Carl E. Watkins, manager of the Student Book Exchange.

Watkins said the SBX discount policy allows anyone who teaches half-time or more a 15 per cent faculty discount.

"As it looks now, nearly every graduate student would be eligible for a discount," said Watkins. "As we incur a loss in giving such discounts, we would be forced to discontinue faculty discounts altogether."

J. J. Weaver, manager of Long's Bookstore, refused to comment, saying that he did not know enough about the situation.
ATRA works for salary hike

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By CHRISTINE BAUER

The Association of Teaching and Research Assistants (ATRA), which has been in the news recently because of its newly won graduate assistant's bookstore discount, began organizing last Spring Quarter.

ATRA was begun last spring when teaching assistants (TA's) and research assistants realized they had little control over the governing of the University.

The major goal of the union is to gain higher wages and improved working conditions for about 2,900 graduate assistants the University employs, according to David Looman, chairman of the organizing committee of ATRA.

Looman has had experience in organized labor groups such as the Social Service Employees Union and the International Brotherhood of Teamsters.

The group's constitution was written and adopted last summer with the provision officers would be elected when membership reached 300. Currently, 250 of the University's 2,900 graduate assistants are due paying members.

According to a pamphlet issued by ATRA, TA's do more than 50 per cent of all undergraduate teaching at the University with little or no voice in what is being taught or how it is taught.

The pamphlet said research assistants have "no control over their own research and spend much of their time fattening their advisor's next book instead of adding to their own knowledge and competence."

The pamphlet explained ATRA "is an association to achieve collectively the goals its members hold individually but cannot achieve through individual action. The purpose of the association is to secure for its members ever increasing control over their own lives."

ATRA represents its members in negotiations for salaries, fringe benefits, job control and job security.

According to Looman, ATRA's major goal right now is to explain to the state legislature and taxpayers the need for additional state subsidies to the University to raise the salaries of graduate assistants.

Looman said he thinks other University representatives besides the administration should "tell the financial needs to taxpayers."

The opinion of most TA's who were interviewed was that ATRA wasn't large enough, but seemed to be growing and was fairly active.

Of 10 TA's interviewed, only one was a due paying member and only one other had never heard of the organization. The rest knew about ATRA, but were "too busy" to attend the meetings.

Anita Collins, a member of ATRA and a TA in biology, said, "They do a better job than anybody else does. It's pretty limited in what they can do because of the limited participation."

Other TA's who weren't members said they had heard about ATRA through its newsletters.

ATRA to lose when Looman resigns post

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The Association of Teaching and Research Assistants (ATRA) will lose one of its most active members when David Looman resigns as chairman of the organizing committee at the end of this quarter.

Looman said he is resigning to work on a dissertation for his Ph.D. in philosophy and because he feels an organization needs new leadership to be truly democratic.

ATRA is a union that represents graduate assistants on campus. It was formed last spring by a group of graduate students.

Looman said he was asked to help organize the union because of his experience with labor unions.

"Since I was having a fit of temporary insanity I didn't know enough to say no," he said.

He said he considers his post a "50 hour a week job," but he feels "every man owes his community and from time to time he has to pay what he owes."

Looman came to Ohio State in 1967 and is now assistant to the chairman of the philosophy department.
David Looman, chairman of the organizing committee of the Association of Teaching and Research Assistants (ATRA), will testify before the Senate Finance Committee next week against the budget proposed by the Ohio House of Representatives.

The proposed budget abolishes fee waivers for graduate students beginning June 1972, and raises graduate student fees to $400 per quarter for 1971-72 and $500 per quarter for 1972-73.

In addition, subsidies for out of state students would be abolished and subsidies for all categories of post-bachelor's degree studies will be left at their 1969-71 levels.

Looman said that ATRA is particularly concerned about the proposed abolishment of fee waivers and the raise in tuition.

"The failure to raise subsidies from their pre-inflation levels will, in due time, destroy graduate education at OSU. If the fee waiver is abolished, it means a $400 per quarter cut in pay for every graduate assistant," Looman said.

Looman also said, "The need to have in hand $400 at the beginning of each quarter, often before earnings have begun, will create an enormous problem of cash accumulation for a group of people who are now so poorly paid that there is no chance to accumulate any savings."

ATRA is also planning an extensive mailing campaign...