

Living under the line

A 7% increase on Henry Hicks' estimated annual income of \$75,000 is more than \$5,000. A 7% increase for the average CUPE wage earner at Dalhousie is roughly \$560.

Yet the Dalhousie Administration has decided that the 7% is the magic figure by which salaries and wages should increase at Dalhousie.

The university is basing its offer on the percentage increase that it has given other employees. Its rationale is that the "gaps" or "differentials" between the different employees (faculty, maintenance, secretarial), although in themselves inequitable at least remain the same.

This is the first contract in three years that the cleaners have not had to negotiate under the restrictions of the AIB. These restrictions have over the last three years forced them to accept wage "increases" below the rate of inflation, that is "increases" that were losses in terms of their real purchasing power. So rather than keeping up with other members of the University "community" CUPE workers have seen themselves slip further and further behind.

For the majority of the people now on strike 7% means they will continue to live below what Statistics Canada has determined as the poverty level in Canadian society.

The University has made them an offer that not only refuses to recognize this situation but aggravates it even further. The Administration's claim that it does not have the money simply does not stand up to the conspicuous prosperity that surrounds it. Ambitious expansion plans have continued unabated on this campus since the mid-sixties. In times of restraint the University has demonstrated considerable expertise in raising huge amounts of money for its own priorities as Dalplex so eloquently testifies.

To claim that it simply hasn't the money to give cleaning workers an increase equal to an amount that it has already given other workers at the University therefore has little validity.

Unfortunately the University has not only advanced this specious argument, it has been able to camouflage the nature of the present dispute and enlist support against the strikers. While presenting the University's position to Student Council, Vice-President Louis Vagianos likened the strike to a quarrel between members of the same family, that would eventually resolve itself like any familial dispute.

In the meantime, it has been suggested that students bear with the inconvenience and do their best to make sure that things not



University administrator Roger Jollimore sweeping at the feet of the picketers.

deteriorate too badly. What this translates into is a tacit request for students to do work normally done by the striking cleaners. In the language of the trade **this is known as scabbing.**

Dalhousie University is not "one big family" presently undergoing a few growing pains. To more than a thousand people at Dalhousie the University is an employer and a highly regressive one at that.

Unfortunately the only way the workers can pressure the administration into paying them a living wage is by withdrawing their labour power. The only way the administration can resist this tactic is by having others do the work done by the strikers. Any act that falls under the work jurisdiction of the union, be it sweeping a floor or picking up litter, is therefore an act against the union and in support of the Administration. If students truly wish to remain neutral then they should assess what the implications of seemingly innocent actions are.

Letters Protecting the garbage

To the Gazette:

Imagine my surprise a week ago while walking up peaceful LeMarchant St., and spotting one police car, a number of Dal security police and a small cluster of concerned CUPE strikers by the driveway to the

back of Howe Hall. Approaching the women first, it was quickly clear from their actions and remarks that they were quite upset. At an exclamation from one, we all turned to witness a huge SHORE truck drive in, to begin

loading the already collected garbage. The Dal security men ranged along Howe Hall, while the police car drove in behind the truck, I surmised to "secure the area".

To satisfy my curiosity, I walked up to one of the Dal police and asked him what he was doing (aside from standing there and looking spiffy). "Protecting the garbage," came the reply. Looking around us, I wondered aloud just who the garbage needed protecting from, the cleaning women (about five in number) or the students drifting by singly or in small groups. Receiving no answer but, "I don't know, I'm just here to make sure the garbage is collected and stop all trouble" I again looked at the women on the sidewalk and tried to imagine them storming the SHORE truck and overturning it, possibly even setting it on fire. Nor could he tell me who had ordered his protection of the garbage.

To gain an answer to this latter question, I approached the friendly Halifax policeman, listening to all the gadgets in his car. To my politely stammered, "Excuse me, would you mind telling me who ordered you here to protect the garbage trucks?"; he turned on me and harshly asked if I was connected with the strike. Admitting I was a student, thus affected by the strike, and repeating the initial question, he proudly replied "Well, we did this at the post office" and again switched to OFF, as if that answer would satisfy me. As I persisted in attempting to get an answer as to who ordered his presence, he alternated between mumbling and irrele-

vancies, until I began to wonder if this wasn't some masquerading frat initiate bent on maintaining his disguise. Finally, as my frustration began to appear, he spat: "It isn't any big secret, Y'know."; and, as the truck had successfully picked up the garbage, he backed out to resume garbage escort.

As I walked to the corner and down Coburg Road, I witnessed another incredible sight. As the SHORE truck gunned it through the main gate, followed closely by first the Dal security car, then the helpful policeman in his vehicle, and finally a second police car with three more champions of justice, I quickened my pace to gain sight of the presumed imposing barrier to their access.

I saw the one male picketer waving his arms to deny entrance to the garbage truck; and the same person leap out of the way as the SHORE truck narrowly missed him, as he turned to watch the line of following police cars. If ever there was a time when I felt like laughing and crying simultaneously, it was in trying to digest what I had just witnessed.

But that's OK. I understand that since that Tuesday, there have been a number of other incidents. Police forcibly moving picketers, trucks injuring people as they drive through picket lines, so this wasn't a novelty.

Actually, all of that I can understand. What baffles me is the ability we students have to somehow shut our eyes to all of that, even as we witness those actions. We would all like the strike to end, yet we "kindly clean" after our-

selves, not realizing that by being a SCAB we prolong the strike situation.

Maybe it is only after graduation that identity and concern manifest themselves in us—but if the person who made my bed was out on strike to get enough money to feed her family, I don't think I could withhold my support.

In wonder,
Bill Laing

Taking a stand

To the Gazette:

We noticed Ron Stang's article "Band-aids not social change" in the *Gazette's* October 19 issue, on the North End Community Health Association's right to consider taking positions on political issues. Although the particular incident which the article discussed happened several months ago, the principle of community groups' freedom of speech is an important ongoing concern.

New Options' staff has always felt that an important part of any community agency's role is to take leadership in speaking out on questions of importance to the lives of people using their services. In the case of the N.E.C.H.A., we know that the members of the Association do feel that amelioration of conditions which contribute to the health problems of people in the North End is a significant aspect of their

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