

NEWS

Union versus union

by Peter Stathis

It's a question of fair-play according to YUSA's (York University Staff Association) two employees, Peter McVey and Susan Sperling. They want to be treated equally as if they were YUSA members and not just YUSA employees. That's why they've gone on strike.

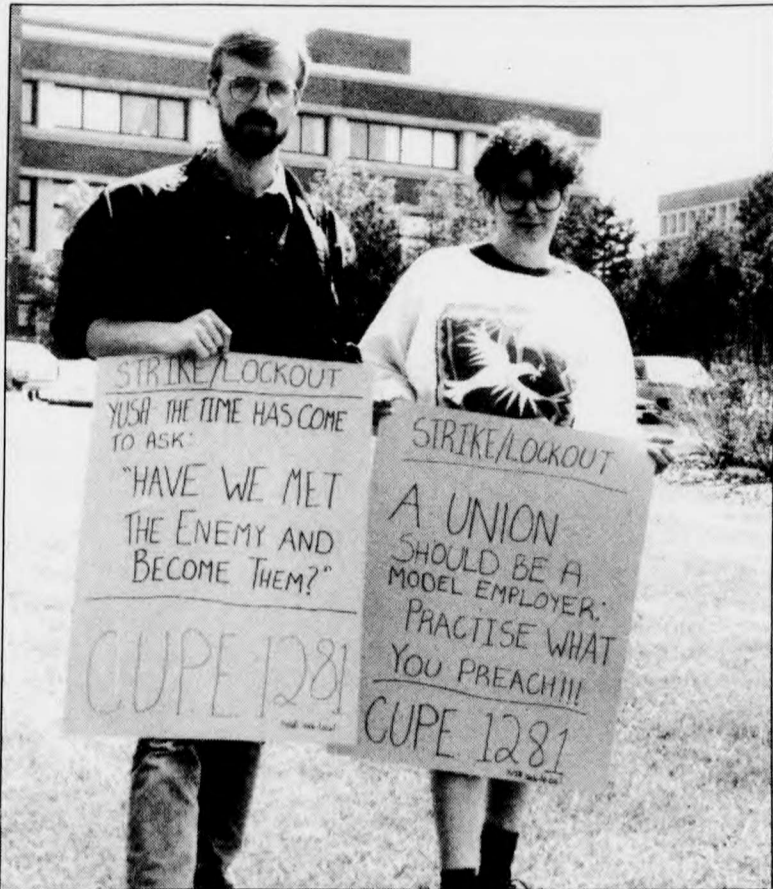
Although YUSA represents approximately 1200 unionized clerical and technical support staff (such as secretaries), the union office itself only maintains one full-time employee, McVey, and one part-time employee, Sperling. The third person in the office is the YUSA president, Celia Harte.

McVey and Sperling took strike action last week on Tuesday, May 22 after negotiations with Harte, who was negotiating for YUSA, had stalled the previous Friday. They were demanding parity in benefits and terms of contract with other York staff. Most of their demands at that time had been met, and there were only three minor issues outstanding: discipline letters, probation period, and retroactive vacation and sick-leave credits.

In an interview, Harte claimed that McVey and Sperling wanted their employee files cleared of everything prior to ratification of their new contracts. This would nullify any record of their negotiations, strike or any previous disciplinary letters, essentially making them new employees with "clean slates." McVey insisted that by going into contract negotiations, he has lost more than he had in his informal employment agreement. He felt he was being punished for exercising his right to bargain and strike.

He said the YUSA president took a hardline approach with Sperling and himself when it gave them a "take it or leave it" offer of settlement late Friday afternoon. When they rejected it, Harte took away their office keys and effectively locked them out, according to McVey, three days before their strike action was to begin. In a bitter letter, McVey and Sperling state that Harte's action will disrupt YUSA's service to its members, permanently sour relations with YUSA's employees, and seriously tarnish YUSA's reputation in the labour movement.

Harte insisted that her offer of settlement was fair, but that McVey and Sperling wouldn't budge on the three remaining issues. "The tone of negotiations was hostile. No matter what we tried to do, they wanted to strike,"



ROCKING THE YUSA BOAT: Peter McVey and Susan Sperling have gone on strike to demand equal benefits as YUSA members

said Harte. Unlike most bargaining procedures, Harte told *Excalibur* that she was not going to

play "high-low games" during the negotiations. She knew what YUSA was prepared to offer its

employees (what she believed was very generous) and gave them the bottom line directly.

The YUSA strikers argue that they were treated informally, rather than as "equals and an independent bargaining unit." According to McVey, "the whole matter could've been decided with some more perseverance during Friday's mediation." He said he was surprised that YUSA would not grant them the same terms and agreements as any secretary enjoys working for the administration.

Harte said that the issue of parity was a moot point as no part-time employee (less than 24 hours per week) at York could get full-time union benefits (such as free tuition). She contended that Sperling was asking for something nobody else in her position received. However, going into negotiations, Harte was prepared to give Sperling a part-time benefits package anyway, as Sperling had only been receiving extra money in lieu of these benefits. The problem arose when YUSA couldn't find a benefits plan in time. According to Harte, McVey and Sperling were unreasonable in not revising their strike deadline when "everyone else was trying their best."

McVey and Sperling have publicly accused Harte of being an

incompetent negotiator and bringing in "scab labour" to replace them. Harte pointed to her many years of bargaining experience in defence, but is adamant, however, that the people currently in the YUSA office are merely union executives, volunteering their time until the strike is resolved.

The strikers want to gain the same terms for themselves and future YUSA employees, regardless of whether they are full or part-time. However, seen from a larger scope, this is hard to justify as it goes against the grain of accepted labour agreements at York. (If you work less than 24 hours per week, you're out of luck when it comes to benefits — that's one of the reasons that organizations hire part-timers and temporary employees.)

If there was, indeed, a problem with the negotiations, it may have stemmed from the fact that Celia Harte, the YUSA president had to wear two hats: one as the negotiator and another as McVey and Sperling's boss.

The whole affair has left bad feelings in the YUSA office and one wonders whether YUSA employees and YUSA membership have lost a symbolic trust in trying to achieve a physical equality.

Perestroika and anti-semitism

by Patrick Follens

With the Soviet Union undergoing sweeping change, the position of ethnic groups such as Soviet Jewry is becoming a cause of growing concern. Moscow correspondent Fred Weir addressed this and other issues in his presentation entitled "Yiddish Culture Under Perestroika" at the Winchevsky Centre on May 15.

Weir, born and educated in Toronto, has spent the past four years in Moscow as correspondent for Canadian Tribune and Canadian Dimensions magazine. Weir, one of the few Western journalists to present the effects of perestroika from a socialist viewpoint has recently published a collection of his articles, entitled *The Soviet Revolution: Shaking the World Again*.

Weir began by delineating the nature of the crisis that exists in the Soviet Union today, both socially and economically. Soviet nations are now rising up and stating their grievances, demanding their guaranteed, but as of yet unmaterialized, right to self government. Likewise, Soviets are

demanding a better way of life, but the economy has not been able to meet their expectations. This has resulted in an explosive state of nationalism in the U.S.S.R.

According to Weir, the Soviet Union has two options: the nationalist viewpoint which strives for self-determination through ethnic separation, and the internationalist viewpoint which is based on retaining a unified band of nations. The internationalists are often dismissed as a reactionist, Stalinist movement by nationalists as well as Western journalists. Conversely, the nationalists are gaining popularity, leaving ethnic groups such as the Soviet Jews in a difficult position, not able to secure roots in any geographical area of the Soviet Union.

"Now with resurgent nationalism, anti-semitism is stepping out of the closet," said Weir, pointing to Mikhail Gorbachev's appointment of Siberian author, environmentalist, and known anti-semitic, Valentin Rasputin to the presidential council. Rasputin is representative of that level of nationalism which has adopted the pastoral

"Mother Russia" approach to the country's reform.

Weir also pointed out, however, that while the nationalist movement in Russia is somewhat alarming in its anti-semitic overtones, it is multi-layered, ranging from no prejudice to extremes such as the "pamyat society," a small radical group of anti-semites that have gone so far as to threaten pogroms on May 5 of this year.

When asked what measures Gorbachev has taken against such threats, Weir replied that while Gorbachev "has been very slow to condemn anti-semitism," there have been charges laid against the pamyat society with regard to certain literature published by them. Likewise, Gorbachev has also appointed the more liberal and internationalist author Chenquiev Aitmatov to the presidential council, clearly as an opposing force to the views of Rasputin. While Weir stated "Gorbachev is practising compromise politics," he also noted that anything other than compromise would surely result in turning an already unstable situation into

chaos.

Weir explained that while the trend toward nationalism should concern Soviet Jews, were it to take a wrong turn, he does not believe "anti-semitism would run rampant in the streets of Moscow." As well, while the reinterpretation of socialism lags behind the times, it has not been entirely abandoned in its ideals, a point that Western journalists for the most part ignore.

As a permanent resident of Moscow, Fred Weir's unbiased and original views of the situation in the Eastern Bloc were refreshing. What was far from refreshing, however, were the manners of his audience. The acoustics of the small auditorium did not allow for the several loud, private conversations that took place during Weir's talk. Likewise, as the night wore on, and the majority of questions began to appear as thinly-disguised open-ended monologues, it became obvious that not only was Weir an intelligent and thoughtful man, but also an exceedingly charitable and patient one.



Toronto
Art Therapy
Institute

The Toronto Art Therapy Institute and the Institute for Arts and Human Development at the Lesley College Graduate School in Cambridge Mass. have completed arrangements for a co-operative program of studies leading to a masters degree in the expressive arts therapies. Students and graduates of the Toronto Art Therapy Institute 2 year diploma program, are eligible to apply to the Lesley College Masters degree program in the Expressive Art Therapies where their graduate-level training at the Toronto Art Therapy Institute will be given credit as part of the Lesley Masters program.

To complete their Masters degree, students spend two summers at Lesley College for 2 five week periods. If you would like to receive further information about this joint effort, please contact our office and a staff person will be pleased to talk to you.

216 St. Claire West Avenue,

Tel: 924-6221.

LET US PREPARE YOU
FOR THE
JUNE 11, 1990 LSAT
OR THE
JUNE 16, 1990 GMAT

- Each course consists of 20 hours instruction for only \$180 or 32 hours for only \$245
- Courses are tax deductible
- Complete review of each section of each test
- Extensive home study materials
- Your course may be repeated at no additional charge

Classes for the June 11, 1990 LSAT
20 hour course June 2, 3, 1990
32 hour course May 19, 20, June 2, 3, 1990

Classes for the June 16 GMAT
20 hour course June 8, 9, 10, 1990
32 hour course May 26, 27, June 9, 10, 1990

For information:
GMAT/LSAT Preparation Courses
(416) 923-PRI-P



Crystal Court

FINE CHINESE & SZECHUAN CUISINE

Fully Licensed

1300 Finch Avenue West, Downsview, Ontario M3J 3K2
(Keele/Finch)

- *Dining Lounge
- *Business Luncheon Special
- *Take Out or Delivery
- *Special Occasion Party & Birthday Party

無任歡迎
堂食外賣
炒粉麵飯
煲仔鐵板
名仔燒臘
粵菜小炒

Delivery start at 11:30a.m.

739-6600

華晶閣