

Small breakthrough

Dal engineers strike ends

by Valerie Mansour and Marc Allain

After 15 days on the picket lines, members of local 968 of the International Union of Operating Engineers have returned to work. The pickets were called off late Sunday evening after day long negotiations ended with the administration making certain key concessions to the union.

On Monday, the Union membership voted 90% in favour of

base rate," he added. The wage issue was not the only union demand that was met during Sunday's grueling talks.

The university also agreed to the principle of an apprenticeship plan which will later be worked out through the Department of Labour. The union was demanding an apprenticeship program for engineers who are only classed as "helpers" and who wish to become more skilled in their trade. Several

appointed, and he reported to the Minister of Labour on October 20. The university administration refused on the grounds that any negotiations concerning money were superfluous as the 5.5% was non-negotiable. Members of the union thought a strike could have been avoided if the university had agreed to conciliation.

The union has been informed that there will be no civil action or suit because of the strike. Previously, the administration had attempted to enforce injunctions to limit the rights and numbers of picketers on campus.

To members of the Union involved in negotiations, the general meeting called on Friday by the Strike Support Committee was the turning point in the strike. Immediately following the mass meeting held in the SUB cafeteria, representatives from the Administration approached the Union to resume talks, indicating that they were willing to negotiate.

The effects of the general meeting were also felt by the other units presently involved in negotiations with the administration.

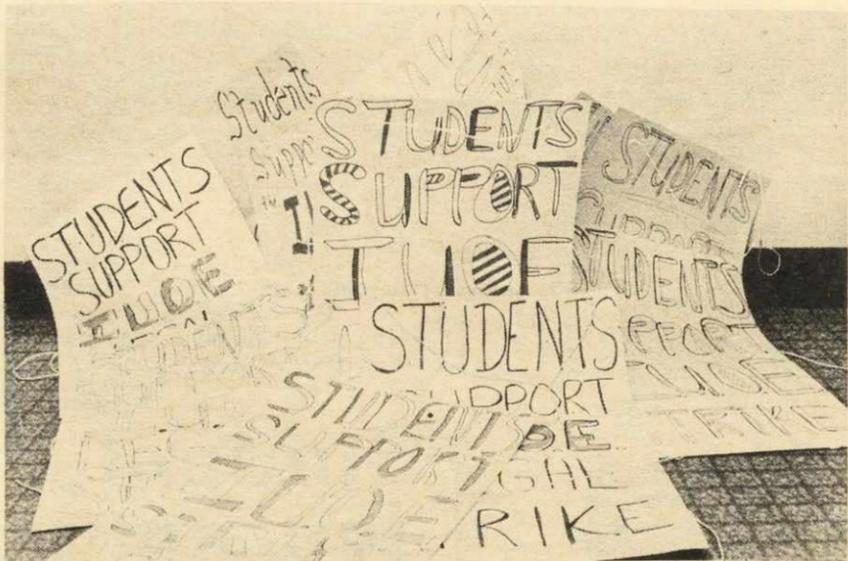
"The rush came on Friday like nothing we had seen for four months," said Jane Mersereau, representative of the Dalhousie Staff Association. "It's the first time they showed any flexibility in

negotiations. They hadn't even been ready to listen to what we had to say until then."

Negotiations for CUPE workers, who voted 89% in favour of strike action on Sunday also voiced similar appraisals of the situation. "Following Friday's general meeting, the Administration came up with a change in their wage offer," said a CUPE representative. "It wasn't something they were prepared to do before. I think management spotted that all groups, the engineers, CUPE, faculty and the DSA, were on the same wave length. Most important of all though were the students. I think management is afraid of students because they can't control them. Management can put the squeeze on us but it's hard for them to do it to students," he said.

Both CUPE and the DSA are seriously considering strike action for the new year, pending the outcome of their negotiations with the university administration. The Dalhousie Faculty Association, although not a certified bargaining unit, is also engaged in negotiations and is presently weighing the possibility of applying for collective bargaining rights.

Louis Vagianos, Vice-President of University Services was not available for comment.



Dal Photo/DeJorey

accepting the University's offer of a 5.5% increase to the base hourly rate of \$5.91, along with a 15 cent an hour increase to come on February 28, the day the contract expires. The 15 cent addition will boost the total increment to 8% and be used as the base rate for the negotiations of the new contract which will begin March 1. The crucial component to the wage settlement, however, was the inclusion of 5 paid holidays in the agreement.

"We're under no illusions as to what we settled for," said a union spokesperson. "Although it appears that the University has saved face by holding to its offer of 5.5%, the five paid holidays included in the settlement amount to an 8% increase in our incomes." By working during those holidays the workers will in effect be able to raise their incomes to the levels they were requesting. "We got the money we wanted plus a higher

union employees have been classified as helpers for ten years or more. The Department of Labour had already accepted a union proposal for a five-year training program leading to journeyman status, but management had refused to cooperate.

Local 968's business agent, Reg Fenerty said that the grievance procedure has also been improved. An employee can now appeal a grievance in the personell department before any arbitrary move is made.

It was also agreed that outside contractors who previously had priority over union people would now supply their own equipment. "But we would have more overtime if they weren't called in at all," Fenerty said.

The union, representing about 70 trades and journeymen on campus, had been without a contract since February. When negotiations broke down in June, a conciliator was

Coalition loses student support

by Miles Thomas and Don Soucy

The staff and students of New Options School has joined the list of groups who have withdrawn from the Metro Coalition of Support for the Unemployed. A statement read by a New Option's student at last Monday's Coalition meeting explained that "We feel that the Coalition is not concentrating enough on the important issues of directly reaching the unemployed by pamphletting and trying to make direct contact with unemployed peoples. This is what we believe the Coalition was originally conceived for."

The staff of New Options, a school for working class people in Halifax's North End, read their own statement. They cited the Coalition's concentration on internal structure instead of organizing the unemployed and the "class collaborationist" tendencies within the Coalition as some of their reasons for withdrawal.

New Options has become the third organization to officially pull

out. Previously, the Halifax Labour Research and Support Center and the Marxist-Leninist group In Struggle had left the community Coalition.

Both students and staff felt that the Coalition was moving much too slowly in working towards its goals.

"They had a public meeting last August and a rally in September, and they haven't gone much further since," said a spokesperson for the school. "Now they say that their next tactic is another meeting in mid-January. Meanwhile, layoffs and shutdowns are occurring every day and we're doing nothing about it."

Students and staff had spent two hours at a Coalition meeting, reportedly feeling very frustrated at the lack of concrete proposals. Finally, New Options student Johnny Fletcher asked the group, "What are you going to do about unemployment?" Both staff and students felt that the fifteen minutes spent by various Coalition

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the dalhousie gazette

8 December 1977

Number 14

Volume 110



Dal Photo / Conrad

Seasons greetings from the staff of the Dalhousie Gazette