

Wages the issue

Cleaners to strike

by Marc Allain

Barring last minute negotiations, Dalhousie's cleaning and maintenance staff will be out on strike as of midnight Monday, November 5. The more than 200 members of local 1392 of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) voted overwhelmingly last week to strike for their wage demands.

The main point of contention between the University and the union is the question of salary increases. The union is asking for an 85c an hour increase while the administration is offering 31c for a one year agreement.

Wages for union members presently range between \$3.82 and \$4.84 per hour. The University's offer is based on 7% of the average hourly wage while the union's demand is for parity with what the University granted the

operating engineers' union earlier this year.

Al Cunningham, national CUPE representative, said the university's offer will give most of the cleaning staff slightly more than \$4.00 an hour. "That just isn't enough to pay rent and put food on the table if you have a family to support", he said.

University Vice president Louis Vagianos told **the Gazette** the University won't offer any more money because "there isn't any more". "The wage issue just isn't negotiable. The 7% offer is one the university has made to the faculty, the staff association and the engineers. That's our offer and we feel that it is competitive with the market situation outside the university," he said. Vagianos added that the equitability of the offer was a different matter altogether.

When asked how the University could claim penury and yet undertake costly programs like the paving of parking lots, Vagianos said the University had obligations to the community. "Improving the appearance of the parking lot is just one of the things we do, we paint houses too," he said.

Cunningham told **the Gazette** that the 7% increase just isn't enough for working people to survive on. "The university has created a boogie man out of fiscal restraint and put on blinders to human relations. The attitude that comes down to our people, and it does "come down" is that they're "only cleaners" and can somehow settle for less".

Cunningham said no decision has been made yet as to whether the strikers would be picketing the Student Union Building. "We've no

dispute with students, our dispute is with the administration." Cunningham said the union would consider not picketing the SUB if they received assurances that they would not be replaced by scab labour.

Student Union president Mike Power said the thought of hiring scabs was "outrageous" and that he had no intention of asking the SUB staff to do the work normally done by the union members. Power said he has extended invitations to both Cunningham and Vagianos to attend this Sunday's Student Council meeting in order to explain their respective positions.

Vagianos said the university has no intention of hiring students or any others to replace the strikers. "We intend to use management personnel and continue business as usual," he said.

The president of Howe Hall, Andras Vamos-Goldman, said that at their last meeting Residence Council passed a resolution stating that they will "endeavor through their own efforts to keep the hall open." He added that the motion did not mean students would be "manning the mops", but that they would keep their

rooms clean and try not to dirty the halls.

Vamos said the presence of the Dean of men, Clem Norwood, and several dons at the meeting greatly influenced its outcome. "People weren't very informed of the issues of the strike and the dean and his dons were able to influence their thinking. The Dean's attitude was either Howe Hall residents support the University in the strike or they were out on their ass", Vamos said.

He said the Dean was trying to play the students off against the workers.

He said the Dean suggested that tuition would go up if the union were to receive more than the 31c the University is offering. Norwood told **the Gazette** he made no reference to tuition fees, although he alluded that residence fees would most likely be affected by an increase in the University's offer.

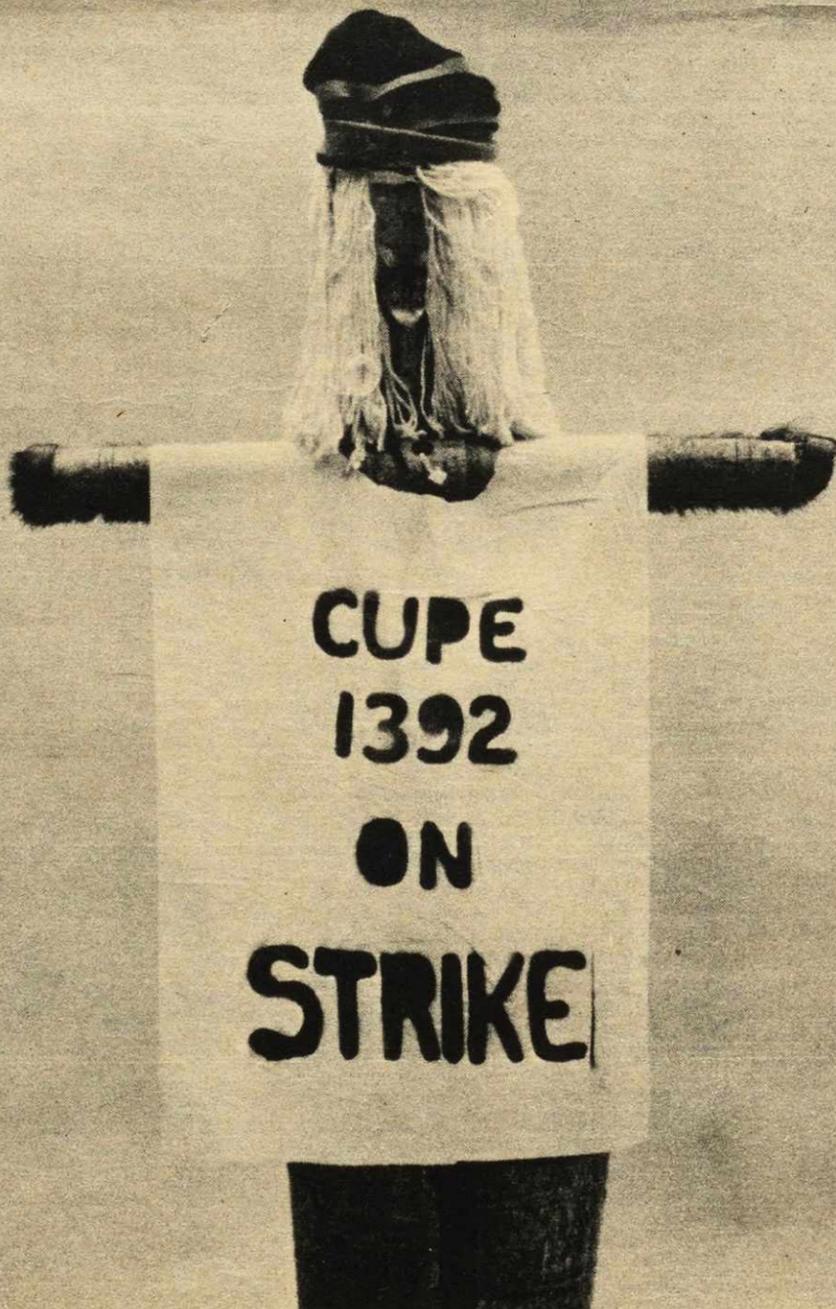
Vamos said that although residence students had more at stake in the event of the strike than off campus students, he did not feel it was fair for the administration to pressure them into taking sides.

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Cutbacks

Show to go?

by Alan Adams and Valerie Mansour

Despite rainy weather, about 150 performing and visual artists gathered at City Hall last Thursday to protest sweeping cutbacks in federal funding for the Arts.

The Protest, entitled "The Show must go on" was organized nation wide by the 1812 Committee, an umbrella organization representing 38 groups of Canadian performers. The Halifax protest was coordinated with similar demonstrations in other cities across the country.

The protest concerns cutbacks of \$82.6 million from the federal budget, including \$70.8 million from the CBC, \$4.9 million from the National Museums, \$3.4 million from the National Film Board and \$860,000 from the Canada Council.

The organization issued a statement calling for a national inquiry and debate on the state of the arts, culture and communications in Canada.

The statement asserted that although Canadian Arts play a minority role in the total community, its marginal presence is a vast improvement over ten years ago. The growing return on the investment in the arts by governments, business, and the private sector would be quickly destroyed if any partner backs

out of its commitment, the statement claimed.

"We must stop treating our arts and culture like a balloon, pumped up for birthday parties but quickly deflated when politicians get nervous or the economy gets tight", Owen Carrigan, President of St. Mary's University, and a member of the Canada Council, read from the committee's prepared text.

Eric Perth, Director of the Rebecca Cohn Auditorium, said the cutbacks don't affect Dalhousie directly, they raise questions as to what Canadian touring companies will be performing here in the future. Perth stated that because of the cutbacks touring companies will be looking into ways of offsetting the cutbacks which he thinks will result in ticket price increases.

In St. John's, Christopher Pratt, one of Newfoundland's more celebrated artists, said that as funding for the Canada Council is lowered, artists find themselves more in competition with each other for what money is available. He said there is a point where funding becomes absurd. "The slices have to be big enough to be functional."

Chris Brookes of the Newfoundland Mimmers Troupe said that over the past two years federal contributions to theatre in the province has almost been halved.