

# LETTERS

## Kind Words

The members of the executive of the Canadian Union of Educational Workers (CUEW) Local 3, wish to thank EXCALIBUR staff for their fair and balanced coverage of the recent CUEW strike. Your genuine understanding of our concerns, especially in the area of overcrowded classrooms, and honest research of "the other side's" position, does much to commend EXCALIBUR's exemplary reporting of campus events.

Our praise and gratitude cannot extend, however, to the "Analysis" published in EXCALIBUR, November 5, "Union Scabs Hurt Strike". To begin with, when the Executive and Steering Committees voted on the night of October 25 to go on strike, we were aware that our Science members would not support the strike. They had informed our Chairperson, Janet Patterson, of this, but we knew we could carry a strike substantially without them. And we did so, for the great majority of our members elsewhere in the University stayed out for the week we were on strike; a high percentage of us actively picketed.

Furthermore, the analysis seriously misconstrues the nature and place of debate in CUEW as a democratic organization. The tentative settlement proposed at a ratification meeting is precisely that: a set of proposals endorsed by the negotiating team, which must go before the general membership for approval. Every member deserves to hear the details of the proposed settlement, as well as an assessment of it. Therefore, it was decided to have an official presentation of the arguments against the settlement, in addition to the official arguments for the settlement. The CUEW executive takes exception to the intimation found in the EXCALIBUR article that unions, and union leaders, must present a uniform and single position on negotiations. Since it is our membership that decides on a settlement, we feel that it is not the leadership's role to impose the official "line". It is peculiar that EXCALIBUR should seem to be promoting the view that union leaders do, and ought to, operate according to such principles as these. Thus, our idea of leadership may differ somewhat from that of EXCALIBUR, and from the view that EXCALIBUR attributes to the Steelworkers. What you take as a sign of weakness, we take as a sign of strength. It is a sign of our commitment to democratic procedures, and of union strength, that opposing viewpoints are aired and accommodated in CUEW as a matter of course.

Our reservations concerning this one article in no way prejudice the respect deserved by EXCALIBUR's otherwise excellent coverage.

The CUEW Executive

(Ed. — Berel Wetstein wrote the strike analysis article. Leaving his name off the article was an oversight and not an attempt to maintain his anonymity.)

## Agree To Disagree

In your November 5, 1981 issue, I was (accurately) quoted as describing Dean E.S. Spence as "the architect of the language on group sizes" in the new CUEW Agreement. I must confess that such is not really the case. In speaking with your reporter I

became carried away by my enthusiasm for the careful yet speedy analyses which Dean Spence had carried out in order to permit the University to agree on contract language which, in fact, had its origin in CUEW proposals.

W.D. Farr,  
Vice-President (Employee & Student Relations)

## What Evidence?

I must take issue with your November 5/81 editorial on the CUEW strike. "This was the first time a York Union received almost full support from the York Community," you wrote.

The evidence you mustered to sustain this claim? "Talk was initiated" and "people were reading the union's constant barrage of leaflets." Surely Excalibur knows that this kind of "support" does not maintain a strike. How many members of the community picketed? How many demanded that all classes be cancelled? The brutal fact is that with the exception of a tiny but gallant minority probably numbering less than 2% of the total, the York community played no active part in the strike at all.

Your final statement, however, is more in harmony with reality. Students "must depend n themselves to defend their own interests" and if Excalibur is serious about the class size issue it will:

1. Use every means at its disposal to keep the issue before the community
2. Publish a column each week devoted to the issue of class size. Classes of unreasonable size should be identified and the appropriate department/division chairpersons and Deans invited to explain why this is the case.
3. Urge the formation of a student committee which will arrive at its own definition of acceptable class sizes and recommend ways in which they can be achieved.

Through this strike CUEW and its supporters have won an important victory. The class size question has been institutionalized and henceforth the administration will have to consider it in negotiations. This is no small step; but further progress will depend on the degree to which students make their opinions known. There is no university without students and for the reason the administration will listen to students. In the final analysis only you have the requisite power to achieve the goal of unreasonable class sizes.

John D. Thomas  
CUEW member

## Farr Away

Your front page story on the settlement of the CUEW strike (CUEW Settles Strike by Michael Monastyrskij, November 5, 1981) has some very revealing quotes from Vice-President Bill Farr. They reveal how the Administration would like us to view labour disputes at York and how the York Administration exploits the very real condition of underfunding. Bill Farr is quoted as follows:

Farr believes York's strike "was more of a dramatization and demonstration than a labour dispute. It was a rather effective demonstration of the problem of

university underfunding...I don't think there was a strike in this, if there wasn't the underfunding issue."

For a union to decide to engage in a legal strike means they have probably exhausted all the opportunities for settlement of a labour dispute provided for by the Ontario Labour Relations Act. In CUEW's case it meant the appointment of a provincial conciliator and later Bill Farr and those he represents would perhaps like CUEW to disappear as a trade union and would like to think of strikes as "demonstrations" or "dramatizations". Why? Why does he not want to recognise a strike as a labour dispute?

I think the latter part of his quotes explains it. The Administration would like to absolve itself from any responsibility for the strike that took place. They would like us to believe that they had nothing to do with it, that it results only from underfunding by the province. While underfunding is certainly a major problem it is time the York Administration took "credit" for its record of settling labour disputes either at the brink or after the process has gone over the brink.

Howard Buchbinder  
Chairperson  
York University Faculty  
Association

## Garbage Galore

Two weeks ago I wrote to "Excalibur" to point out how scarce funds are wasted at the University when garbage pick-up in the parking lots alone costs \$10,000 a year and vandalism accounts for many times this figure.

The weekend some "joker(s)" totally destroyed a parking kiosk which it will cost at least 3,000 to replace, while the eighty emergency telephones located around campus were all torn from their mountings and removed. In the latter case, apart from the replacement costs involved the inconvenience and perhaps hazard to the safety of members of the community occasioned by this irresponsible action shows a complete lack of concern by the perpetrators for the well-being of others.

C.G. Dunn  
Director of Safety and Security  
Services

## To Tell The Truth

In regard to the remarks made by Chris Savvas president of the Hellenic Students Association in "Letters to the editor", Nov. 5, concerning Prof. Ridpath's comments in Eco. 200.3 on Oct. 19, 1981.

To set the record straight, Prof. Ridpath was responding to the question as to whether he thinks the government of Andreas Papandreu will be good for Greece or not?

Prof. Ridpath's response contained no 'derogatory remarks' about Andreas Papandreu or his government, but merely gave an opinion of the government's chance to succeed based upon Prof. Ridpath's knowledge of economics.

The Hellenic Students Association should keep a close eye on the distorted statements of its informant before they 'strongly oppose' anything.

As a personal message to the informant: you had better learn the difference between 'derogatory remarks' and basic economic theory before the upcoming exam.

Ian Shaw  
Eco. 200.3

*Cordial Invitation*

The Council of the York Student Federation Inc.  
invites you to vote in the 1981 Fall By-Elections  
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Regular Polls: November 19 10:00 am to 7:00 pm

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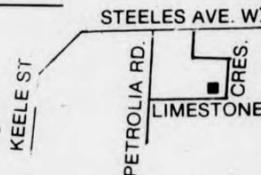
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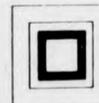
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