

Maintenance workers still in poor position



by Jim Young

A strike by the Dalhousie maintenance workers, members of Local 1392 of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (C.U.P.E.) was averted when, on January 27, the university officials backed off and finally agreed to sign the previously agreed upon contract. One result of the preparations for strike action was that grievances regarding working conditions were aired and debated as the workers shared their experiences. Discussions with members of the union prompted the writing of this article to bring the maintenance staff's working conditions to the attention of the students and faculty.

The first issue which must be raised is that of working a forty hour week at wages below or near the poverty level. The federal government set \$7,600 as the minimum annual amount necessary for a couple with four children to live on. Prior to the new contract, the light-duty cleaners were making \$2.30 an hour, giving them an annual wage of \$4,784. Under the terms of the new contract, light-duty cleaners are making \$3.25 an hour (\$6,760 a year) and will be making \$3.50 an hour on April 1 (\$7,280 a year). The wages for most of the workers (men classed as heavy-duty cleaners) is \$3.80 an hour with the caretakers making \$4.00 an hour now and \$4.35 on April 1. These wages do not compare favourably with those of workers outside the university. For example, maintenance workers in the Halifax schools are receiving \$5.05 an hour for exactly the same duties.

Working for low wages is bad enough, but this situation is compounded by the fact that most buildings are under staffed. The Dunn Building, for example, is staffed by only four workers. Although this condition has been a problem for some time, in recent years workers who left the staff weren't being replaced. In addition back-up night shifts, set up to clean the mess after weekend events at the S.U.B., have been cut back and now the day workers have to handle these duties along with their regular work load.

The university's penny-pinching policies regarding supplies does not make the workers' duties any easier. Supervisors have been advised to cut down on "unnecessary" supplies. Requests for supplies which would make their job easier, faster, and produce better results have been denied. In addition, there is an insufficient number of machines such as polishers, vacuum cleaners, etc. and those that they do have are not always suitable. For example, in recent years the university has refused requests for needed machines and has ordered home appliances instead of heavy-duty machines. The heavy use given these vacuum cleaners has resulted in burnt-out motors and other mechanical failures. This is a regular occurrence which is further complicated by the university's insistence on ordering machines which can only be repaired out of the province, thus lengthening the time these needed machines are out of service. For example, the Life

and Sciences building has two Convertomatics which are ideal for cleaning the corridors - areas of heavy traffic. These two machines have been idle several months awaiting repairs.

The position of women on the maintenance staff has not been one of equality. There are women doing heavy-duty work but are classified as light-duty and paid accordingly. These women often end up doing heavy-duty work because the buildings are understaffed. This situation should be somewhat

alleviated by the new training program which the workers have incorporated into the new contract.

To sum up, the maintenance workers at Dalhousie are working under conditions which must be radically changed. The next opportunity for realizing these objectives will be in August when the present contract (which was retroactive to August, 1975) comes up for renewal. It is hoped that support from the students and faculty will aid the workers in their struggle for better working conditions.

Council renegs

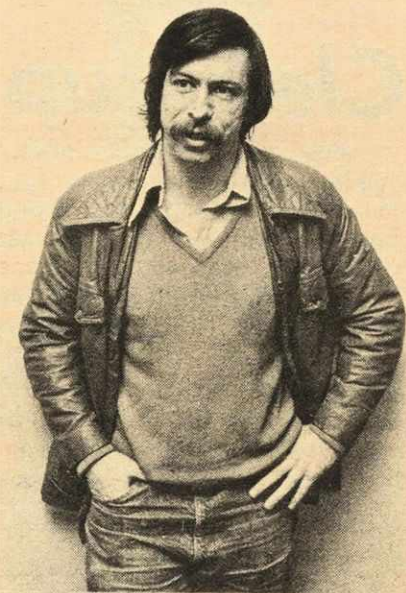
The Students Union has yet to pay former Course Guide Chairperson John D'Orsay \$540.00. May 15 the Students Union gave D'Orsay a check for \$480.00 as partial payment for his services, and then withdrew the check claiming it was a computer error.

Since that time D'Orsay has received no money and no formal acknowledgement from the S.U. that they owe him any money. Informally indications are that the Students Union will offer D'Orsay more than \$200 and that he will settle for \$300.

Previous editors of the Course Guide were paid honoraria and D'Orsay told the Gazette he was led to believe he would receive \$60.00 per month by then Union President Dan O'Connor. Eight months work would be \$540.00.

D'Orsay filed his Course Guide Chairperson budget believing his honoraria would come from the Students Union Honoraria Budget rather than the Course Guide budget. Council has not recognized the mistake and offered to make good the debt.

John D'Orsay has been pressing for the money since May and when he filed his Course Guide Chair-



The unpaid John D'Orsay.

person Report in September he again asked for payment. Council stands behind the position that it did not approve an honorarium in the Course Guide Budget and neither did it pass a motion stating he should get paid.

Athenaeum editor fired by council

WOLFVILLE (CUP) ---The editor of the Acadia University *Athenaeum* has been fired by the University's Student Council because of what that body calls "irresponsible behavior".

Bringing the motion before Council January 21, Student President Jim Enman charged editor Michael Chiasson with using second hand news sources and ignoring the advice of three lawyers.

According to Enman, Chiasson had written an article January 8 charging a visiting professor with plagiarism during a mathematics seminar in which the mathematician failed to acknowledge sources pertinent to his talk. The professor was an applicant for head of the mathematics department.

The article drew protest from the majority of the Acadia mathematics professors, the University President, and from the Student Council executive.

University President Dr. J.M.R. Beveridge, in a letter to council president Enman said he could "think of no story published in the student newspaper that has hurt to a greater extent any department, or indeed the University itself than this article".

Beveridge, along with 10 Acadia

Math profs who submitted their letter to the editor of the paper, requested an apology and a retraction.

Chiasson, however, in separate meetings with the University President and the executive of the students council, refused to retract or apologize, stating that he had acted in good faith on information from sources, which, though he claimed journalistic prerogative in not naming, he had no reason to disbelieve.

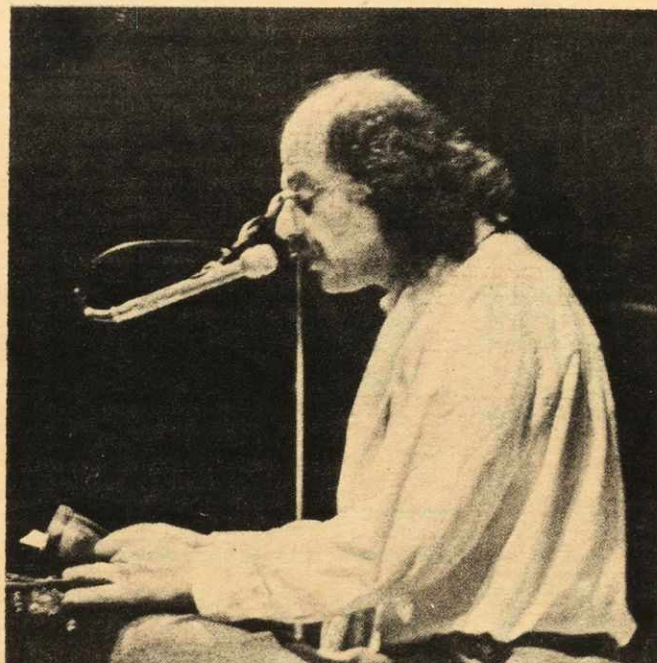
Enman wrote a publishers retraction and ordered Chiasson to print it on the front page of the January 15 issue of the *Athenaeum* -Chiasson printed the retraction but also included an editorial accepting no responsibility for the retraction.

Staff members of the *Athenaeum* presented their constitution to the January 21 council meeting asking that a committee be struck to investigate the issue, however, Enman stated the procedure was "a waste of time" and moved that the constitution be suspended.

Council agreed to suspend the constitution and agreed that since the legal opinion sought on the matter indicated that Chiasson's

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Allen Ginsberg says
 "Make the Gazette your favorite mantra."
 Meeting Mon. night 7:30 Feb.9