

Hundreds want end to faculty strike

TORONTO (CUP)—Hundreds of students at Ontario's community colleges are demanding an end to the teachers' strike that has kept them out of class since Oct. 17.

They fear they could lose their academic year if the strike by the 7,600 college teachers, members of

the Ontario Public Service Employees Union, continues for more than two weeks.

They publicly demonstrated their concern at Queen's Park, the seat of the Ontario legislature in Toronto, Oct. 19, when they paraded a stretcher symbolizing the

corpse of quality education around the legislature grounds.

Chanting and placard-carrying students from as far away as Sarnia, Peterborough and Ottawa milled around a huge banner that read: "Students need to be taught."

Both representatives of the faculty union and the Council of Regents, which governs the colleges, addressed the students. They said they wanted a speedy settlement to the strike as well.

Sean O'Flynn, college faculty union leader, said the union is wil-

ling to negotiate a settlement fair to both sides and thanked the students for throwing their support behind the teachers.

"By your support today, you have shown your concerns are like those of the teachers: quality education with an end to overcrowding."

Diane Schatz, a representative of the Council of Regents, said the Ontario government supported the regents' latest offer. When she said the government also supported the idea of a quality and accessible education, students responded with chants of "Bullshit! Bullshit! Bullshit!"

The students' action prompted both sides to return to the bargaining table Oct. 21, but there is no end to the strike in sight.

The strike affects about 120,000 full-time and 500,000 part-time students. Many are concerned about missed classes, late term papers, postponed exams and the fate of their student loans.

Monika Turner, Ontario Federation of Students chair, said if the school year is extended to make up for lost time, college students will have problems finding summer employment. She said graduating students will be in an even worse position.

Ron Ried, a nursing student at George Brown College in Toronto, said most students are continuing their studies at home but want to return to the classroom.

"We really want to get back to school more than anything else," he said.

Ried said the strike has come at a particularly bad time for most students, including himself. "It's a disaster. I've got a job lined up for the summer and I stand to lose at least \$2,500 and an entire school

year," he said.

Phil Gunn, a student council president of Seneca College, said student councils are trying to provide students with updates on the strike.

"Unfortunately, there is nothing much we can really tell them," Gunn said. "I think the strike is really hurting the students and a lot of them are going to be dropping out."

But their fears may be premature. Last week Ontario education minister Bette Stephenson "guaranteed" that students would not lose their school year. But she later backed down and said she would "attempt to guarantee" the continuation of the academic year.

While speaking in the house, Stephenson expressed her disapproval of back-to-work legislation as a means of ending the strike.

"It is within my experience that the best settlement is one that is reached by mutual agreement between two parties," she said. "It is my strong belief that this is also the best solution in this case."

An organizer of the Oct. 19 demonstration, Lester Fox, said Stephenson should take a stand on the issue. "[She] has not committed herself to a statement and I think she should."

At issue in the strike is the teachers' workload. Teachers want more time to spend outside the classroom marking assignments and planning lessons.

Teachers are required to spend 19 hours a week in the classroom. The union has said it is willing to accept management's offer of a one-year wage increase of about five per cent, which would raise the average teacher's salary to \$39,000. □

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Big Four—big bucks or big sham?

MONTREAL (CUP)—McGill University is betting it can bring back the era of beanie caps, letter sweaters and crowds of alumni coming to cheer "the old alma mater" with the added bonus of lots of fresh bucks for its sports program.

Québec's two other English universities think it's an expensive mistake which won't pan out for McGill.

McGill plans to pull out of the Québec University Athletics Association and form a new league with Queen's, University of Toronto and Western Ontario—actually a revival of the popular 1940's grouping—the Big Four.

"It's going to bring our alumni back [to games]," McGill athletics director Bob Dubeau said. "There's going to be a lot more interest. When Carleton, Bishop's [Universities] come here now, there's no interest."

"Companies are going to be a lot more interested [with the Big Four]," Dubeau said. "McGill's opportunity to increase revenue will be very attractive."

Bruce Colter, head of athletics at Bishop's University in Lennoxville, Québec, said times have changed since the heady days of the 40s and 50s when the Big Four games out-drew the Canadian Football League.

"Montréal is a large sophisticated city with a lot of sports now," Colter said. "It's not like 30 years ago."

Colter also said travelling back and forth to southern Ontario for most of its sports is going to be very expensive for McGill.

Concordia University football coach Skip Rochette said the annual Shaughnessey Cup game, the 16-year-old rivalry between McGill and Concordia, is the most well-attended university football game in Montréal. Rochette says he doubts a McGill-Toronto game will draw as much interest.

Dubeau said McGill wants to continue playing Québec teams as well as Big Four teams.

But Bishop's Colter isn't sure that will happen.

"If they pull out and ruin our league who's to say we're not just going to say 'screw you' [and refuse to play them]?" □