

Excalibur

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Proposed pay hike too low

Union rejects admin offer

Monday morning 106 of 172 members of the Building Service Employees' International Union, local 204 (York and Glendon), rejected the administration's new contract offer.

As a result "inside" workers such as maintenance plumbers and carpenters, and cleaners are seriously talking about a strike in the near future.

At issue is money and the contributory pension plan.

All the workers, but especially the cleaners, want a higher wage increase to keep up with rising prices.

Male cleaners want an increase from \$2.30 an hour to \$2.80. They are offered \$2.50.

There was also a demand that the university's compulsory pension plan be made optional.

D.J. Mitchell, director of personnel, expects further meetings with the union negotiating committee. A settlement is probable; but a strike can't be ruled out.

As one worker said: "According to the feeling at the meeting they'll (the cleaners) go on strike if they don't get the raise."

Since the cleaners dominate the union, a general strike would result.

It would involve maintenance people, groundsmen, bus drivers and parking control officers. Security personnel and stationary engineers belong to separate unions, currently negotiating their own agreements with the university.

Mitchell doesn't expect a strike for three reasons.

First, there was no strike vote at Monday's meeting. Most unions, he said, would have held such a vote at that stage.

Second, relations with the negotiating committee have been "good". They had already agreed to the university's new offer. It was the general membership that later rejected it.

Third, Mitchell doesn't believe that the workers, when they realize fully the "consequences" of a strike will opt for such drastic action.

Many issues, including all non-money points have already been cleared up, Mitchell feels.

Workers are fed up, want a living wage

By BRIAN MILNER

Ron and Mario are cleaners — and they're fed up.

They're sick of fancy union talk and don't understand much of it anyway.

They just want more money; it's as simple as that. They'd like to pay their bills, and maybe — just maybe — have something left to put in the bank once in a while.

Mario laughs when you mention the bank. He's got a wife and kid and a house in Downsview and a mortgage. He takes home \$70 a week; that's right — 70 crummy dollars a week.

There's an expensive pension plan in the university offer. What does Mario want with a fancy pension? He'd like to keep the \$4.35 weekly it will cost him. If he could add that money to his take-home pay it would help — a little. "Nobody wants the pension," he says. But Ron does.

Ron wants it for the future. He's single; he doesn't have a family to feed or clothe.

Ron is no happy-go-lucky bachelor though — he works hard and is always broke before payday.

"Any guy," he says, "that works for \$2.39 an hour is a stupid ass."

The administration offered Ron and the other cleaners 20 cents more an hour. That won't even pay the increase in Ron's rent when they raise it again next month.

What about the other cleaners? One of them works part time at another job. Most have trouble paying their bills.

Ron and Mario clean about 30 classrooms after 10 pm when the last of the night students shuffle out. They scrub boards, wash floors and walls and clean desks. And if you think that's easy, try it sometime.

There will be a strike vote in the next week or two. Can anyone blame them if they walk out on such stimulating, enjoyable work?

But Mitchell is unaware of the tense, emotional atmosphere and angry talk at Monday's meeting.

"You have to do something," said one worker when asked if he would strike.

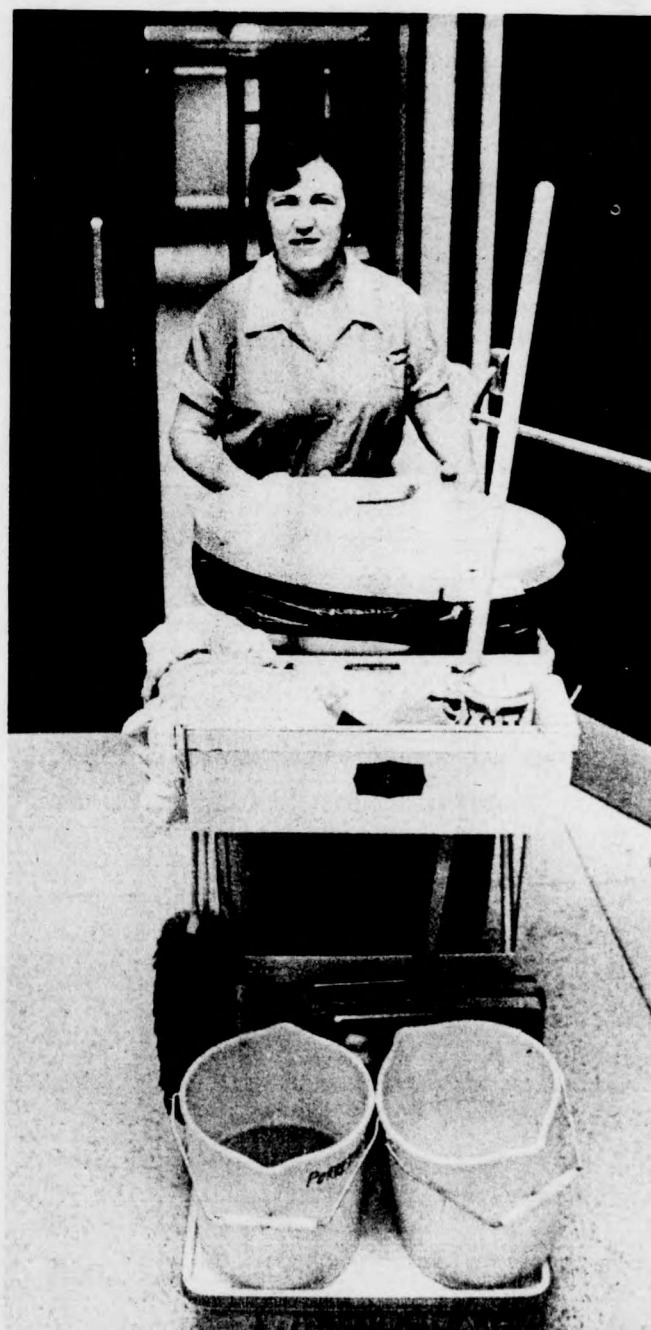
If a strike is voted and this could happen in the next two weeks - notice will be given to the Labour Relations board; 14 days later ... a strike at York.

It's up to the workers now to get their demands clear among themselves. Once this is done it will be up to the administration to decide how it wants to play this version of the labour game.



D.J. Mitchell

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Maria Poretta cleans up after the night students go.

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