

by Anita Levine
and George Orr

Six o'clock in the early bitter dawn is a black hour, full of sleet and cold coffee. Especially if the town is Peterborough, and your reason for being there is to walk a picket line.

There were 100 students up there last Friday, 14 of us from York, standing in the dawn drizzle wondering what would happen next. Few of us had ever picketed before.

We were hailed by the University of Waterloo contingent who'd got there ahead of us. They have their own local of the Industrial Workers of the World — or Wobblies — an early labor movement that used to be pretty powerful.

They directed us to the guild office, where we were given the pep-talk by the strike organizers. Then we were armed (with signs) and sent out to fulfil the mission. "Keep those damn printers out of the plant."

The printers started to float in for the 8 a.m. shift. Cautiously they cruised the block, eyeing the lines of signs. They hadn't expected this.

Then they started to drift in on foot. Clusters of them moved forward and we drew our breaths. Surely this was the classic confrontation. Us versus them.

But what were we supposed to do? How far can a picketer go? All we could do was walk in tighter circles, hoping they

would go to the next door. And printers in the flesh are bigger than printers in speeches. So first blood to them. A couple got past the door, and the word spread. "They're starting to get in."

The organizers looked most upset. "Hold them", they whispered. But how? That's when the first fight started. Two fellows, complete with lunch and toques, attempted to walk through, peacefully. And nobody had the power to stop them. So somebody hit one of them in the stomach, and the brawl commenced. Pushing and shoving. Those in the middle tried to get out, and those on the outside tried to get in.

And the cops came down like flies, whistles tooting for reinforcements. And it was over. We all got lectures on the rights of the printers by the printers' assistants, the local constabulary, and peace returned to the whispered insult of "Pig".

And more looks that spoke "We don't like your kind in our town". Tension began to rise. But the students were in their element now. Here was real news, not campus politics.

The groups marched their picket circle like a scrub platoon of soldiers. Up and down in sloppy step, to the tune of Solidarity Forever.

An irate lady interrupted two line captains conferring with the Guild Secretary on the sidewalk. "You're blocking the

way. This IS a public thoroughfare you know."

This was how confrontation should be. Walk proud with your soupy sign and turn off the town.

The milkman pulled up, and unloaded gallons of chocolate milk to a chorus of good-natured boos.

The paddy-wagon pulled up, and a few mouths dropped open. We weren't ready for that yet. The publisher walked out to his car. Here was the bad guy, minion of the magnate Thomson. He drove off to a chorus of boos, and the snow kept on coming down. When he came back, it was with a load of scabs. Two Waterloo students who tried to keep him off the parking lot were busted by the cops. Like, they HAD to arrest somebody.

Coffee came out from the strike headquarters across the road, and kids started to move inside, to eat, sleep and go to the john. Inside, it seemed like an all night party was breaking up, with people drying out coats and shoes, thawing their toes, and praying for the buses to come.

It all seemed wasted. They got the paper out after all. And the damn buses were late.

But tomorrow morning in the predawn Peterborough darkness, a crowd of university students will converge on the Examiner building to try it all over again. Only this time there'll be 400.



Since Nov. 2, reporters for the Peterborough Examiner have been striking Lord Thomson, the owner, for a decent wage.

Peterborough strike peters no more



Photos by George B. Orr
Uptight cops watch as 100 students join the Examiner picket line. Wait till they see the 400 who'll arrive tomorrow at dawn.

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