

# York strike in review

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by Michael Clow

**(YORK UNIVERSITY—TORONTO)**—The first of what may be a series of strikes at this Ontario university during the current academic year has come to an end. This latest labour-management skirmish ended after a two week walkout when sporadic mediation efforts by senior personnel of the Ontario Ministry of Labour succeeded in arriving at an agreement between the York University Staff Association (YUSA) and the administration.

The dispute had an increasingly familiar cast to it: university employees demanding job security and increased wages to combat the threatening squeeze of unemployment and inflation were met by an administration that acknowledged the justness of their demands but argued there was no money available because of government cutbacks in higher education funding and stagnant (or declining) enrolment.

The union's original demand was for a 10% increase in wages to meet a 9.5% cost of living increase and for a job security package similar to that already granted other unionized workers at the university.

The administration refused to grant more than a 4% increase (on a wage scale

where half of the support staff earn less than \$10,000 per year). Then, they refused to discuss the job security issue.

The result was the break off of negotiations and a walkout on September 18, which immediately closed the bookstore, all library services except the reserve room, the university post office and put a halt to such student related services as course-changes etc. Pickets were set up immediately to advise students, faculty and others of the strikers position.

The pickets were also intended to close down the university as much as possible in order to pressure the administration back to the negotiating table.

Three days into the strike the administration used scab labour to re-open the bookstore for an evening, and though a considerable number of students rushed to buy books the uproar caused by protesting members of the Student Strike Support Committee and disapproving members of faculty forced the university to back down from the continued use of strike-breakers.

Although support from other unions was forthcoming, Ontario law makes it illegal for unions to aid the strikes of others by refusal to cross picket lines.

The York faculty (YUFA) and the graduate teaching assistants (GAA) have been unionized only in the last three years. This was a response to administration

positions and tactics described by one faculty member as those of a 19th century employer.

The attitudes of the administration here has been to treat the university as merely another business. Teaching and support staff are seen to be the same as industrial employees and students the consumers of a product.

York has gained a reputation as one of the clearest cases of staff-management polarization. Some explain York's labour history as a reaction to the squeeze of education cutbacks, a situation aggravated the predominance of ex-senior military figures and ex-provincial civil servants within the administration. These men, it is claimed, have little understanding and less sympathy for traditional norms of university life.

Faculty at Atkinson College (a York University affiliate) "postponed" classes for the 12,000 part-time students during the second week of the strike, and 10% of fulltime classes at York University were reported cancelled by faculty and teaching assistants, defying the law individually. Student reactions varied, some supporting the strike vigorously with a sit-in at administration offices during the second week and many being quietly sympathetic. Others were openly hostile towards the strikers. Several picketers were reported hit by cars of irate and unsympathetic students.

By the end of the second week, all sections of the university seemed anxious to see an end to the strike which was tying up normal university activities and becoming increasingly nerve-racking.

As made clear in a faculty association letter to students in support of the YUSA strike, the disputes inside universities today bring to the fore the twin issues of cuts in provincial post-secondary funding (often involving federal money as well) on the one hand and the allocations of resources within the university by the administration on the other.

The situation at York, heavily hit by the decision of governments to decrease the number of university graduates, has been aggravated further by a phenomenal growth in very highly paid administrative posts and the successful challenge of university claims of lack of money for salaries during last year's negotiations. Many here doubt the equity and wisdom of administration priorities within the shrinking budget imposed by the province during this period of increased emphasis on other areas of government expenditures.

The YUSA strike does not mark the end of labour disputes which will affect the operation of this university. The Graduate Assistants Association called its members to a strike vote on October 16 in the face of administration refusal to alter its 4% increase offer for the cost of living allowances (that potential strike has since been averted), and the faculty is continuing closed-door negotiations for the renewal of their contract.

# Collective offence

**CASTLEGAR, B.C. (CUP)**—The trial of three Genelle, B.C. men charged with blocking a public roadway in an effort to prevent uranium mining was adjourned October 25 to mid-January.

Genelle residents, eight miles south of here, are celebrating, sensing a victory.

And in Rock Creek, 120 miles west, an overflow crowd of more than 300 jammed the tiny community's largest hall that evening to hear a panel of experts warn of the dangers of uranium mining.

They heard a rancher, labour union leaders, the B.C. Medical Association and a nuclear physicist all oppose any uranium exploration or mining in B.C.

And they cheered when one of the lawyers representing the Genelle three was asked how to oppose the exploration.

"The people of Genelle know what to do."

The lawyer, Craig Patterson, returned to Castlegar immediately to appear at the continued trial October 25, this time held in Rossland, 40 miles south of here. The trial follows the schedule of the circuit judge.

The three men were arrested July 10, when they sat in a roadway to stop a uranium exploration crew's bulldozer.

The crew was on its way to an exploration site in China Creek watershed, the source of the Genelle water supply. At the trial October 24, the head of the crew testified they had done exploration work at the watershed for about a year before confrontation with the Genelle people began in July of this year.

During that time, he said, he took no precautions to safeguard the creek water and didn't know that it was a community water supply until Genelle residents barricaded the access road to the exploration site.

At Rock Creek, Patterson explained the defense will establish that, under criminal

law, people are allowed to do whatever is necessary to protect themselves, their health, and their environment.

And, he said, the defense will establish that uranium exploration is such a threat.

He quoted the district superintendent of mines, who told the trial in Castlegar that "it's politics that decided what an exploration crew gets away with".

The best defense, Patterson said, is a collective offense.

# Seabrook protesters arrested

**SAN FRANCISCO (ZNS-CUP)**—More than 370 people have been arrested recently in anti-nuclear demonstrations around the United States.

The demonstrations were called to support efforts on the part of the Boston Clamshell Alliance to occupy the construction site for the controversial Seabrook nuclear power plant in New Hampshire.

While 44 members of the Boston Clamshell Group were arrested for attempting to occupy Seabrook, by far the largest number of demonstrators picked up was at the Black Fox Reactor in Inola, Oklahoma, October 7, where 346 people were issued summonses. The protestors were cited for trespassing, and ordered to appear at future court dates.

The Boston Clamshell Group reported that some 15 protestors arrested October 7 were still in jail, and that they had vowed to continue a hunger strike until they were freed without bail.

A Clamshell spokesperson said that the 15 people were trustworthy and should be released on their own recognition.

# Cops drag anti-nukes

**TORONTO (CUP)**—Sixteen members of the Ontario Non-Nuclear Network (ONNN), who had demanded the release of documents concerning nuclear reactor safety, were arrested October 23 after occupying the offices of Hydro Ontario's chairperson.

The occupiers had been awaiting a reply from chairperson Robert Taylor to a letter they sent that morning asking him to release reports dealing with accidents at the Pickering, Ontario and other nuclear power generating stations. They also wanted similar documents and internal Hydro correspondence released in the future.

According to W.G. Morrison, of Hydro's design department, several of the documents the protestors wanted were publically available. However, because of the technical nature of the matter, Hydro employees usually must explain them.

The demonstrators had spent the morning waiting in the lobby of the Hydro

building. However, when Taylor had not sent a reply by a 1:30 p.m. deadline, they decided "to go up and get it", according to demonstrator John Bennett. They had originally set a 1:15 deadline.

Upon reaching Taylor's office, they were read a reply, which Bennett said they found "inadequate". The demonstrators refused to move after Hydro officials informed them they were trespassing.

"We'll stay here until the cops carry us away or until we get the documents," they said.

According to Bennett, city police then proceeded to drag several demonstrators out of the office and into paddy-wagons waiting behind the building. Twenty-five ONNN demonstrators who had been picketing outside the building moved to watch.

The demonstrators were held in police cells for six hours, Bennett said.

A trial date of October 27 was set.

# Racism blooms

**BURNABY (CUP)**—Racism is flourishing in Vancouver, according to members of the Simon Fraser University South Asia Students Association.

"We want to tell you that racism exists today in Vancouver and Burnaby in all its hatred and violence," association president Manji Pendakur told 200 students at a rally held October 19 to demonstrate the seriousness of the situation.

He cited a recent attack on a SFU graduate student who was beaten by a group of men apparently on their way to see a punk rock concert on campus.

Last December, two SFU students were attacked on a BC Hydro bus.

"We are tired of being told that violence is sporadic," Pendakur said, "and that nothing can be done about it. Something can be done if there is a will."

NDP candidate Svend Robinson said the problem of racism arose from the economic conditions now existing in Canada and that the only way to solve it was to get involved in the political process and change the system.

Canada was a prime target for the National Front, he said, an "ugly phenomenon and Neo-Nazi".

SFU professor Hari Sharma said immigrants have the right to defend themselves from racist attacks with violence, if necessary.