

NOVEMBER 9, 1973

Toronto graduate assistants close to unionizing

TORONTO (CUP) — A month-long drive to recruit the last two hundred graduate assistants needed to certify the University of Toronto Graduate Assistant Association (GAA) is underway.

Michael O'Keefe, GAA chairman, said the push is also aimed at those undergraduates who do the same work as their graduate counterparts.

To be certified as the collective bargaining agent for the approximately two thousand U of T assistants, 35 per cent or about seven hundred have to be signed up. So far about a quarter have signed with the GAA since September.

Once certification is granted a vote of over fifty per cent of the bargaining units is required before bargaining with the university can take place. Even with the organizing drive still going on, the GAA has already started putting up a fight for graduate assistants.

Lawyer Martin Levenson has taken the GAA's claim for back vacation pay, required under the Ontario Employment Standard Act, to the provincial government for a ruling, and O'Keefe is optimistic of a decision favorable to students.

The Act stipulates that an employee must receive vacation pay at a rate of two per cent of his wages per year. O'Keefe said the

University has not done this for years.

O'Keefe says the GAA is not getting recruiters in each department to sign up graduate assistants, including teaching assistants, markers, tutors, research assistants, demonstrators and instructors.

The University of Windsor GAA, the only certified association of its kind in Canada, has won a uniform wage of \$2400 per year, maximum allowable by law, a grievance procedure, and a voice in departmental hiring committees.

U of T assistants have an average wage of less than \$1,000 per year and they do more than 40 per cent of the undergraduate teaching, according to the GAA.

O'Keefe reports that some of the GAA's best response from engineering where wages are the lowest. Average incomes in other departments such as physical and life sciences are as low as \$800, compared to \$1,800 for humanities and \$1,250 for social sciences.

In some departments, assistants are expected to take on teaching and marking work at no pay, and many undergraduates only receive half the wages as their graduate equivalents for the same work.

One of the GAA's claims is to provide standard wages based on an accurate estimate of the time required to fulfill teaching and

other duties rather than the current system of "contact hours" which does not take into account preparation time.

This year's effort represents a marked change from a similar effort a year ago to organize assistants. That attempt failed last June mainly because of mistakes made in trying to meet Ontario Labor Relations Board standards. O'Keefe said those same mistakes are not now being made.

Student directories available now

Student Directories are to be issued within the next week. Approximately 2750 copies of the student Directory are to be printed at the selling price of 25 cents each.

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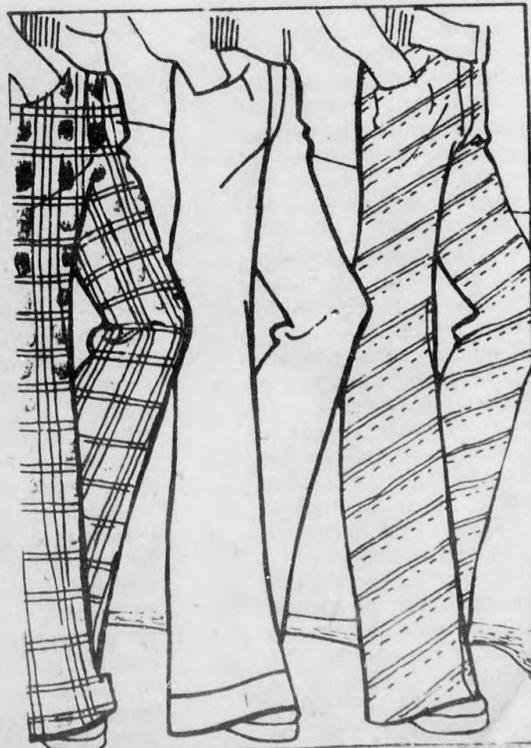


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