

# York's cleaning staff worry about their future

By BRIAN MILNER and HARRY KITZ



In its attempt to get closer to student, staff and faculty problems, grievances and questions at York, EXCALIBUR has started an "Action Line" type feature, the second installment of which appears below.

If you are having trouble or just a little aggravation at York and you want help, come to the friendly EXCALIBUR office in the central square or drop us a line.

York's cleaners are worried about their jobs, their benefits and their future — if any — at this university.

It's true that all of the former members of the Service Employees Union have been working without a contract since last June, and without a union since Oct. 15, but the cleaners, at the bottom of the pole, have the most to fear.

Without union representation or a binding contract their jobs are simply not secure. Classified as members of the general (unskilled) labour force, they could be replaced without undue difficulty — and with the unemployment crisis, they wouldn't find new work soon.

Several cleaners have asked EXCALIBUR for answers to some nagging questions concerning benefits and job security. To get them we went to D.J. Mitchell, York's personnel director.

Regarding benefits and working conditions, Mitchell said that "the university is operating under the conditions of the old (expired) agreement as much as is possible."

This means that, among other conditions, hours of work, overtime premiums, sick leave and the much maligned pension plan will remain unchanged.

Job security, though, may be another matter entirely. A rumour has recently been circulating among workers that a private firm will get York's cleaning contract, putting about 200 people out of work.

"The university hasn't made any statement that it would or would not bring in a sub-contractor," Mitchell said; but "a decision could be made at any time to do this."

Mitchell added that he recognized workers' fears in this area, but stressed that "no private company has been brought in."

The threat of an independent cleaning firm could be just another bargaining lever — but the fact remains that many private corporations have contracted out their cleaning to cut costs and avoid sticky labour problems.

York, in a budget squeeze, has already quietly reduced the cleaning staff.

It is to be hoped that the threat of public censure and exposure will prevent the administration from engaging a private company or even from further reducing the cleaning staff (thereby greatly increasing the work load).

Meanwhile, until a new union is available to protect their interests and job security, York's cleaners — like its students — remain at the mercy of a computerized bureaucracy that, at times, can appear awfully frightening.

The contest is open to all members of the York community (EXCALIBUR staffers excepted). Entries should be satirical in emphasis with reasons (if possible) for selection.

All entries must be DATED and signed, and submitted to the EXCALIBUR office (Suite III, Central Square) no later than December 1, 1970. In case of duplication, winning entry will be decided by earliest date of entry.

The winner and loser will be announced in the December 3 edition.

## Name the column contest

LOSER: \* \* Two weeks free meals at Versafood

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