

# Ontario students demand end to teachers' strike

**TORONTO (CUP)** — Hundreds of students at Ontario's 22 community colleges are demanding an end to the teachers' strike that has kept them out of class since Oct. 17.

They fear they could lose their academic year if the strike by the 7,600 college teachers, members of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union, continues for more than two weeks.

They publicly demonstrated their concern at Queen's Park, the seat of the Ontario legislature in Toronto, Oct. 19, when they paraded a stretcher symbolizing the corpse of quality education around the legislature grounds.

Chanting and placard-carrying students from as far away as Sarnia, Peterborough and Ottawa milled around a huge banner that read: "Students need to be taught."

Both representatives of the faculty union and the Council of Regents, which governs the colleges, addressed the students. They said they wanted a speedy settlement to the strike as well.

Sean O'Flynn, college faculty union leader, said the union is willing to negotiate a settlement fair to both sides and thanked the students for throwing their support behind the teachers.

"By your support today, you have shown your concerns are like those of the teachers: quality education with an end to overcrowding."

Diane Schatz, a representative of the Council of Regents, said the Ontario government supported the regents' latest offer. When she said the government also supported the idea of a quality and accessible education, students responded with chants of: "Bullshit! Bullshit! Bullshit!"

The students' action prompted both sides to return to the bargaining table Oct. 21, but there is no end to the strike in sight.

The strike affects about 120,000 full time and 500,000 part time students. Many are concerned about missed classes, late term papers, postponed exams and the fate of their student loans.

Monika Turner, Ontario Federation of Students chair, said if the school year is extended to make up for lost time, college students will have problems finding summer employment. She said graduating students will be in an even worse position.

Rod Ried, a nursing student at George Brown College in Toronto, said most students are continuing their studies at home but want to return to the class room.

"We really want to get back to school more than anything else," he said.

Ried said the strike has come at a particularly bad time for most students, including himself. "It's a disaster. I've got a job lined up for the

summer and I stand to lose at least \$2,500 and an entire school year," he said.

But their fears may be premature. Last week Ontario education minister Bette Stephenson "guaranteed" that students would not lose their school year. But she later backed down and said she would "attempt

to guarantee" the continuation of the academic year.

While speaking in the house, Stephenson expressed her disapproval of back-to-work legislation as a means of ending the strike.

At issue in the strike is the teachers' workload. Teachers want more time to spend outside the

classroom marking assignments and planning lessons.

Teachers are required to spend 19 hours a week in the classroom. The union has said it is willing to accept management's offer of a one-year wage increase of about five per cent, which would raise the average teacher's salary to \$39,000.

## The lemming instinct

by Jim Herbert

Alberta Liberal party leader Nick Taylor says the provincial government's economic policies demonstrate a "lemming-type instinct."

At a forum held by the political science undergraduate society last Friday, Taylor charged the government's strategy for creating jobs is based solely on the exploitation of non-renewable natural resources.

Taylor also indicted the Tory government for ignoring the service industry and under-funding education.

Singled out for special criticism was the government's policy of encouraging the development of the petrochemical industry.

This policy is impractical, according to Taylor, because the Alberta petrochemical companies have to

pay extremely high transportation charges to get their products to the coast where they can be shipped.

Because of these high costs, Alberta petrochemicals will be more expensive and less competitive than those made in the Middle East.

Taylor said despite the fact Alberta "doesn't have a huge supply of oil and gas," the Lougheed government is selling our natural gas at bargain basement prices.

He admits this will create jobs in the short-term, but at "what a cost for the future?"

Taylor adds that even the debt-ridden Mexican government refused to sell its natural gas so cheaply.

Taylor's alternative strategy for job creation would encourage the development of an economy based on services, which could include

"anything from finance to banking to design to food processing."

Alberta's geographical position would be beneficial for this type of economy because the "transportation factor" isn't as important in the manufacture of the service industries as it is in the heavy industries, such as the manufacture of petrochemicals, said Taylor.

He said although the backbone of service industries is a well educated populace, the Alberta government spend less of its revenue on education than any other provincial government.

"In one of the wealthiest societies known to man since the Industrial Revolution, you have quotas (at universities) — so people can't get in."

According to Taylor, instead of plowing revenues from the petroleum industry back into the education system, the government prefers to "run barefoot over gold coins" — to hoard money in the Heritage Trust Fund.

Taylor said that since "a good environment attracts services," the government should concentrate on creating "the best possible living conditions" — the best schools, better controls on pollution, and more encouragement to the arts.

He also criticizes the Lougheed government for giving virtually no help to farmers and small businessmen in the area of credit.

"We've done nothing about trying to give long term loans. We treat the farmer like he's running Woolworth's." This is despite the fact that organizations of less than fifty employees create seventy-five per cent of our jobs.

Taylor said if he were premier, the "first thing I'd do is put together a system of long-term credit."

Taylor is extremely optimistic about his party's chances in the next election, stating flatly "I'll be the next premier."

He believes that during the next provincial election campaign, the provincial Tories will be hurt by their ties to the Mulroney government, which will be by then very unpopular.

The Liberals will then capitalize on this — "they'll (the voters) be mad at Mulroney and Lougheed, but they're not going to trump over to the socialists."

Although Lougheed will call an early election to try to get around this problem, Taylor said he will get "less than half the vote."

Taylor points to examples in Alberta history when the population has swung from one party to another as an almost monolithic group — the UFA, the Social Credit, and the Tories in 1971 — and says this will happen for the Liberals in the next election.

He believes the NDP has "suffered a crippling blow" with the death of Grant Notley.

"It's almost impossible (for the NDP) to get another man of his stature and middle of the road policies."

He says the NDP is at least partially dominated by labour unions and that "if anyone victimizes society today, it's the labour unions as much as it is General Motors."

In his view, the NDP philosophy is outmoded.

"You still believe in class warfare. Your outlook on history is based in the 1930s."

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