

# Still no staff contract

Mike Monastyskyj

In what has become an annual ritual, the York University Staff Association and the university administration were still haggling over a new contract when last year's eleventh hour agreement expired August 31.

For the moment, the possibility of a strike rests on the success or failure of meetings to be held with John Dempster, a conciliator from the Ministry of Labour. According to D.J. Mitchell, York's Director of Personnel Services, a strike is only permissible "a certain number of days after the ministry has deemed the conciliation process to be complete."

According to YUSA President Karen Harell, the union is demanding "better job protection in the form of a strengthened seniority clause and a better job posting clause.

We also want to ensure that in the event of layoffs, our members have as much protection as possible."

Emphasizing that "our settlements over the past few years have been significantly below the increase in the cost of living," Harell added that the union is asking for a wage increase of 13 per cent. Mitchell, on the other hand, argues that there are other costs not included in this figure. He told *Excalibur*, "I don't accept the premise that they only have 13 per cent on the table."

*Excalibur* asked Mitchell if the Board of Governor's decision not to increase tuition fees by the full amount allowed by the Ministry of Colleges and Universities has influenced the amount of money available to administration negotiators. In response he said that "one of

the components is the availability of funds," but he would not make a direct connection between wage offers and the BOG decision.

In the event of a strike, the big question will be whether YUSA and the Canadian Educational Workers' Association (the newly expanded GAA) intend to walk out together? When asked this Harell replied: "We've been in touch." Mitchell refused to comment on such a possibility.

Is a strike likely? "There is always a chance. We will have a more complete picture after the meetings in conciliation." Mitchell, however, added a positive note by comparing this year's negotiations with those of last September. "I feel the climate has been much more constructive this year. There's been some good talking."

# Ministry goofs, students pay

OTTAWA (CUP) Ontario students who were the victims of a computer error will have to return overpayments on their student grants.

Over assessments were made to 1,700 post-secondary students in the province on their 1978-79 Ontario Student Assistant Program (OSAP) grants.

Bette Stephenson, Minister of Colleges and Universities, said August 20, students have the usual six months grace period after their studies end to repay the overpayments, which range from \$600 to \$1,000. This applies only to the 300 students who are still studying. Most other people affected by the error must pay the money within 30 days.

Stephenson said she regretted the error but felt repayment was necessary. The first notices of the overpayments, issued to the students in June, said they all must pay the money within 30 days.

Peter Birt, Ontario Federation of Students (OFS) Information Officer said the student group does not think any of the 1978-79 errors should result in repayment.

However, Birt called the Ministry's decision a "partial victory" because 300 students do have the usual payment schedule.

"But we're still calling for a substantial review of the program that permits this kind of thing to happen," he said.

The OSAP application states that the government is not responsible for errors resulting from grant processing.

David Cook, NDP Education critic, said errors were made in the assessment of parental assets. The computer company is not liable, said Cook.

According to OFS, several of the students are considering legal action against the Ministry.

# Fee strike nixed

WATERLOO (CUP) The University of Waterloo Student Federation has no plans to take part in a fee hike strike to protest the tuition increases levied for this year by the Ontario government.

The Board of Directors of the Student Federation decided June 22 to cancel the protest. Peter Hoy, Board of External Relations Chairperson, said the chances of success for the fee hike strike were remote and that the strike was building up anti-student feeling among the public.

Angered by the decision, ten students occupied the Federation's offices July 16th, demanding that Federation President Neil Freeman call an emergency general meeting to discuss the issue.

The Committee to Support the Fee Hike Strike had previously presented Freeman with a petition calling for the meeting. Freeman told them they needed

more signatures and finally disallowed the petition because the by-law under which the petition was originally endorsed was illegal.

The occupiers claim the Board of Directors was not acting in the best interests of the students by cancelling the strike.

"We are trying to act for the students because the President isn't," said Maggie Thompson, the only Board of Directors member to vote against terminating the strike, and one of the occupiers.

In a statement to students, Freeman said the occupiers carried out "constant harassment" on federation personnel and forced them to leave the office.

The occupation ended July 22. Thompson said the group will return to occupy the federation offices in September if Freeman does not reverse his position on the fee hike strike.

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