

EXCALIBUR

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CUEW negotiations

Searching for a last minute agreement

Michael Monastyrsky

York's teaching assistants and part-time faculty have moved a step closer to walking off the job. Last Saturday, eighty-four per cent of the members who participated in the Canadian Union of Educational Workers' strike vote gave the union executive a mandate to call a strike if this weekend's mediation sessions fail to lead to a settlement.

Union chairperson Janet Patterson believes, "It is up to the other side whether or not there will be a strike. If we don't have a good settlement within the three-day mediation period we will be leaving the classroom to set up picket lines on Monday morning."

With regard to the strike vote, William Farr, York's vice president in charge of employee and student relations, says, "I'm not in the least bit surprised. The union is expected to receive

a mandate to call a strike before it enters into 11th hour negotiations."

This is the third year in a row



Alex Wolosewycz

Patterson and Doyon

that the CUEW executive has been given the power to call a strike in the event of unsuccessful bargaining. In the two previous years settlements were reached after last minute mediation. Farr states, "Since I've been at this university there have been about fifty negotiations with unions, but there have only been two strikes."

The union and the administration agree that should there

be a strike, disputes over job security and class size will be more the cause than the issue of salaries. Chief Steward Charles Doyon says the union is prepared to strike "on any and all of these issues."

Concerning job security, the union is asking that cutbacks in staff be made only in the case of declining enrolments, and that the proportion of teaching assistants to part-timers be kept constant. Because of cutbacks in government grants, Farr believes that more students would have to be accepted in order to acquire enough money to maintain the current staff.

CUEW argues that the administration has not done enough to fight the cutbacks. According to Patterson, "They are taking the public face of fighting cutbacks, but they are accepting it within the university." She proposes the

administration send representatives to the October 29 rally against cutbacks which will be held at Queen's Park.

CUEW is proposing the following limits on class size:

- *twenty students per (1 hour) tutorial group
- *twenty-four student per laboratory demonstrator
- *eighteen students per college tutorial

Patterson argues that "York comes dangerously close to false advertising in presenting itself as a place with small classes."

Farr responds that the university no longer bills itself as an institution with small classes and adds, "I hope class size is not a strike issue for them because it is something that we cannot move on."

The union is asking for a twenty per cent increase in salary for all of its workers except College Tutors, where the

increase demanded is one hundred per cent. Patterson says a twenty per cent increase would still leave teaching assistants with a lower salary than their U of T counterparts. She adds that College Tutors deserve a hundred per cent increase because they receive a salary three times lower than Course Directors who do essentially the same work.

The administration has offered a twelve per cent increase which becomes thirteen to fifteen per cent when a tuition rebate is included. Farr states that CUEW's refusal to make a counter-offer demonstrates that the union is being inflexible. CUEW, on the other hand, says the administration is being inflexible on every issue except money.

"We haven't made a counter-offer," says Patterson, "because we were waiting to hear from our membership to see what it feels the important issues are."

Clownman and The Incomparables: humanity and life

"After my drama degree at Windsor I went to a school in Paris called Jacques le coq. I used to watch the clowns on the street, and I'd see how wrapped up the audience was, and I'd think, but he's not really doing anything. And I was fascinated."

Robyn Butt

Dean Gilmour is like those secretive celebrities everyone has heard of and talks about, but very few people have actually seen. It may be the university system. It may be the mysterious hours he spends in basement drama studios. It may be magic. The real Dean Gilmour is a tall raggedy man with round eyes and a red scarf trailing over his shoulder: the Clownman.

"It's so easy to get caught up in the heroic artistic life. Clown life is just stupid; stupid little details. In Europe clown and masque and Comedia del'Arte are part of the tradition. Here, theatre and acting are what the Beautiful People do to entertain other Beautiful People. Clown is appealing to me because it's anti whatever I'd grown up to think theatre was.

"Like Chaplin. He's full of humanity and life. And that was it, to find life in me and in the people I work with. It seemed honest and so much theatre I'd seen seemed dishonest; creating in someone else's image. The most important thing about clownwork is that it's you. Your folly, your poetry...it's not a persona. Through the simplicity of clown you say what you want to say—and you say many things."

Officially, Gilmour is a member of the part-time faculty of York's theatre department. He

is also hired to direct by the graduate theatre program and, with his wife Michelle Smith, runs the new Theatre Autumn Leaf downtown, where they recently did Fassbinder's *Bremen Coffee*.

"For the audience, oh, it's a little joke, a little fun. To take the things people do every day and focus attention on them. The emphasis is on the actor, what he's doing or saying to you with his eyes and body. He has to find the simplest, cleanest, easiest gesture that says the most with the least amount of tension.

"In fact, it's a good rule of art: to be most evocative with the least. Clownwork, when it works, touches the audience most."

During one of Gilmour's clown workshops with grad theatre students last year the idea for his current directing project, *The Incomparables in Africa*, germinated. The idea was Graham Smith's, who took it to Gilmour. From that moment on the life of *The Incomparables* would make a fine bedtime story for jaded theatre students.

It is an original student work (Smith's), endorsed by the department months in advance, funded by the grad program as one of this term's major productions, and provided with its own special guest director in the person of the Clownman himself. And the play will finish its run this week by moving downtown to the Tarragon's Maggie Bassett Studio. Their own involvement aside, Gilmour and Smith agree: this is what theatre schools should be doing more of.

"It's a big fight to get things realized. Disorganization seems like a university disease. Everyone wants to control their piece of action. But there's probably no need to dwell on problems, because in the end

things happened. *The Incomparables* has done a lot to define the new program.

"There are things I can get from a professional theatre that I can't expect here. But there are things here I can't get from professional theatre: this way we have time to find out, to develop the script. If you're downtown you have to serve up a product. Here you don't have to think of it as a product. There are no financial worries and there's the luxury of time. It's a wonderful thing.

"Rehearsals have gone well. That's the best good thing I can say."

The Clownman invites me to a rehearsal and I follow him through dim cafes and crooked halls to a place where he holds open a door into a blustery courtyard. I dart across it in the windy dark and duck after him through another door. This one leads to a bright, high room with mirrors and a ceiling like marzipan. Strange raggedy people suddenly bloom like a flock of musty coloured birds. They touch my hair and clothes, murmuring or gasping to themselves; they crowd close-up offering declarations of undying love and eight-by-ten theatrical glossies.

"Who are you? Harry? Can I take your coat?"

"What if I get cold?"

"Oh." "Ah." "Um."

It is a mediaeval lunatic asylum in a 1965 movie. And then they go away, because their play is starting and someone has entered who booms: "Like the rain this dance will know when it is over. Have I told you something you did not know before?"

The play finishes: "Death is the most beautiful of women." I get up to leave and the Clownman touches my shoulder.



Alex Wolosewycz

Clownman Meets The Lizard: Dean Gilmour, director of *The Incomparables in Africa*, premiering tonight in Mac Hall at 8 p.m.

He whispers something, smiling a little. I slip into the night, faint calls floating after me: "Good-bye... Thank you... Good-bye..."

What the Clownman whispered was: "Clowns are just a little off, you know. Just not quite right."

The Incomparables in Africa opens tonight in Mac Hall at 8 p.m. until October 27 (except Oct. 25); in Maggie Bassett Studio at the Tarragon Theatre October 29-November 1.