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Stong students transplant trees as part of college's Orientation week.

Campus food boycott planned to combat layoffs, high prices

By PAUL KELLOGG and JULIAN BELTRAME

Plans to boycott Commercial Caterers at York are under way, as a result of a September 9 meeting of Local 254 of the Restaurant, Cafeteria and Tavern Employees and 25 of the Versafood workers laid off July 15.

Versafood, which had operated the York dining halls as a monopoly since the university's inception, lost the catering contract this summer to five independent caterers when the university decided it could no longer afford to subsidize the campus food services to the tune of \$200,000 a year.

When it left, Versafood left behind nearly all the workers it had hired to run the York operation.

Streamlining costs, York's three large-scale non-union caterers (Rill Food Services, Commercial Caterers, and A and G Cafeterias) re-hired less than half of the old staff, often at reduced pay scales.

The decision to boycott Com-

mercial Caterers, the largest of the independent campus caterers, was a result of a joint proposal submitted at the meeting by student president Dale Ritch and union representative John Sobolewski.

Sobolewski told the gathering that "students and workers will have to work together if the workers are to get their jobs back.

"Without student support, the workers have no chance," he said.

"I think the students are going to have to take strong action to get what they need and a boycott is just the kind of action that works," Ritch told Excalibur, justifying his strong stand.

Besides wanting the union workers re-hired and the union reinstated at York, Ritch is trying to mass enough student support to run the new caterers off the campus.

"Students realize they're getting ripped off by the administration; food prices are ridiculously high and the quality is shitty," (See Excalibur food sampling on page 3).

"We want to pressure the administration into kicking the caterers out, and into running food services by themselves, overseen by a democratically elected board of students, faculty and staff," he said.

Ritch and the CYSF have called for a mass rally of students on October 2 to see if he can find support for the boycott.

"If the boycott works, heads are going to roll," Ritch told Excalibur last week, "and if it doesn't, mine may be the first."

Asked to comment on the issue, Bill Small, vice-president of business, called the boycott a "highly inappropriate action based on misinformation." Small added that the caterers had the right to hire whomever they wanted and that the Versafood workers were not members of the York community, but employees

of Versafood.

Ex-union shop steward Laura Kelly retorted that after working at the university for eight years, she considered herself a member of the community.

Small did, however, agree to write to the caterers urging them to treat the Versa workers fairly. So far, only 28 of the 69 Versa workers have been re-hired by the caterers.

Paul Farkas, vice-president of Commercial Caterers, whose campus operation includes the Complex II dining hall, Central Square and the French Cafe, said that few Versa workers had applied for the open jobs.

"We gave them the opportunity to apply for a job but only 38 bothered to submit applications," he said.

Kelly denied that Versa workers were unwilling to apply for jobs under the new caterers, and charged the caterers with discriminating against the union workers.

"They were always trying to confuse the situation so that none of us would be hired. They didn't inform anyone where they could apply and interviews were arranged for a Sunday afternoon at a time of year when most of the workers were away on vacation.

"Even the existence of the application forms was only known through word of mouth because nobody was able to locate any.

Kelly maintained that behind the refusal to hire more Versa people was not an unavailability of job openings but a reluctance on the part of the caterers to hire workers with union backgrounds.

Spokesmen for the caterers admitted that many of the Versa workers would not be hired even if positions were to open up. Refusals to work overtime, unsanitary work habits and incompetence, were the reasons they gave for not hiring more Versa workers.

GAA's take case to Board

By ANNA VAITIEKUNAS

"All we need is certification," said Mark Golden, president of York's Graduate Assistant Association, Monday.

The GAA is currently in the process of certifying itself as a bargaining agent for graduate and teaching assistants on campus. The GAA is a member of an international trade union which represents most GAs and TA's (teaching assistants) working for universities and has bargaining rights at those institutions.

According to Golden, the university refused to grant the GAA recognition as an acceptable organization for bargaining rights on the grounds that GAs and TAs "learn from their work".

D.J. Mitchell, head of personnel Services for York said that the assistants are in essence students and should not be eligible for bargaining rights.

At the Ontario Labour Board hearing last month Golden contended that students were put on the stand to testify that "yes they do work, they get paid for their work, and if they didn't work they wouldn't get paid. In this way, the GAs and TAs have a contract with the university."

Golden also said that Dean of Arts Sid Eisen, when placed on the stand, said that he too, learnt from his work.

Golden said that "it is outrageous that the university won't recognize us as a legal

bargaining agent." And added that they "plan to fight the issue to the very end." Golden plans to elect stewards in each department and begin discussions for a contract with the university for wage increases.

Most GAs and TAs at York receive \$2500 for research, tutorial instruction, paper-making and other work comparable to faculty work.

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Analysis

Confrontation politics still the heart of ULS strategy

By JULIAN BELTRAME

A ULS council representative was talking on the phone with a reporter.

"The honeymoon is over," he announced, emphatically.

The United Left Slate majority had been in power only two months, and with no effective opposition to trounce, they had begun to find enemies in their own camp.

What irked this representative was the autocratic leanings of some of his fellow members. One in particular, George Manios, the academic affairs director, had said little in one long and testy council meeting except "call to the vote", the order which effectively halts all debate.

Whenever a vote was called, the ULS held the day. Their thirteen members in the CYSF gave them free rein over the summer council.

"I can't believe some of the things that have been said," he continued. "There are some members in the ULS who want to do away with democracy. They want to set up a strong executive and push everything through."

By September, this same member was telling the reporter that all the disagreements had been ironed out.

"These people have been confronted and been told we weren't going to start doing things not in keeping with our campaign promises. Now we're getting healthy and de-bureaucratized."

PARANOIA

What the ULS had come through were the last traces of a paranoia which had clung like a shroud to the old party faithfuls since 1972, when the ULS lost to John Theobald by 39 votes. The USL firmly believed they had been robbed of the presidency, and the events of last spring did little to dissipate that belief.

(Last spring, a ULS presidential victory was nullified by a referendum. A second election, which the ULS won, was ordered by the CYSF.)

Since then, the party has become tightly knit and wary of non-leftists, whom they often view to be right-wing reactionaries.

Perhaps directly as a result of this mentality, Dale Ritch dissented from a proposal which Ken Dryden, the Montreal goaltender and former Nader-raider, presented at a meeting of Ontario university student presidents in July.

Dryden wanted to organize a student Public Interest Research Group in Ontario, modelled on the PIRGs already in exist-

ence in the U.S. Although the cost was high (\$10 per student on a voluntary basis), Ritch's main objection to the plan stemmed from an ideological disagreement.

The proposal calls for professional researchers to consolidate information on general interest issues (e.g. CANDU reactors). In the event their findings conflict with government statements, PIRGs would use the media to arouse public sentiment against the government.

Ritch believed this method would prove ineffective and that PIRGs would be a waste of human resources and money.

CONFRONTATION POLITICS

As the summer wore on, the ULS became more at home with the thought of being the power in CYSF and jot just a radical fringe beating its head against an immovable wall. But the policy of confrontation which Ritch believes to be the only effective political weapon at its disposal, remains at the centre of ULS thinking.

One of the ULS's first acts as a council was to withdraw \$10,000 from the bank for use during the summer. In the past, the CYSF borrowed operating funds from the administration, thus freeing their own funds to collect interest.



Dale Ritch

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