

EXCALIBUR

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Workers sacked for budget cuts standards down

Nine cleaners were told last Thursday to say good-bye to their jobs at York.

The lay-offs came as a result of cutbacks in the physical plant budget but director John Armour does not know if that economy measure will be considered economic for long.

He told Excalibur Monday that efficiency can't be improved so maintenance standards are declining unreasonably and will result in more rapid depreciation of York's sophisticated facilities.

Since April 1972, building space has increased by 16 per cent while the number of salaried inside and outside workers has gone from 261 down to 238.

The average area of floor space per cleaner has increased from between 14,000 - 16,000 square feet to 19,000 square feet, Armour said.

Six additional cleaners will be necessary when the fine arts building opens in April, but with the physical plant budget so low, Armour suggested jokingly that it might be a good idea to leave it "in moth balls" for a few years until the financial situation improves.

Workers in the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 1356, who have little control over job security or the budget problems first saw the lay-offs as a scare tactic to affect contract negotiations.

However Armour says that he was sorry the workers had to be discharged. "Because I know the job is there to be done."

He said he tried to cut back in as many other areas as possible first. Electricity is being conserved by removing unnecessary light bulbs. Windows will not be washed, roads repaired, catch basins cleaned, trees inspected, rugs and upholstery shampooed, drapes dry cleaned and painting will not be done as frequently as desired.

Armour said the neglect will become noticeable in a while. "You can get by for a short time not doing things but then it starts to snowball on you. It will start to look like a hell of a place."

Cleaners, yardmen in pre-strike talks

Workers at York are in the midst of hard-line negotiations with the York administration and some say they're closer to a strike than they've ever been before.

The workers, 238 cleaners, housemaids, groundsmen, skilled tradesmen and drivers, are members of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, Local 1356. They are asking for a \$1 across the board wage increase and 100 per cent paid benefits.

Yesterday and today, union and management officials are meeting with a labour board negotiations officer to try and settle a final deal and avert a strike that could cripple this university.

At present, male cleaners get \$3.50 an hour, the women make \$3.00 an hour and tradespeople receive \$5.90 per hour. York pays for two-thirds of all benefits, including sick leave and holidays. There is no union pension plan.

Management has offered a six per cent increase, with a money-benefits split to be discussed. According to Statistics Canada, a wage increase of seven per cent is needed to maintain the same real income given last year's consumer price index increase of 5.1 per cent. A spokesman for the government bureau said this was due to the progressive tax system that took away more money with increasing pay.

Don Mitchell, York's personnel manager, said the six per cent offer was made Oct. 3, before York found itself in a budget crunch. Since then, drastic cutbacks have left the physical plant the hardest hit area at York. At a union meeting Sunday, CUPE president Walter Zampolin said workers should remember that York president David Slater had assured the York community it was "people before things" in budget considerations.

"That's faculty. We're only the cleaners," a voice called out. Slater made his remark at a fall senate meeting when it looked like 160 faculty might lose their jobs in the budget squeeze.

The York student federation endorsed the union demand for parity with other cleaners in Toronto Tuesday night at a council meeting. Council president John Theobald dissented and asked that his dissent be recorded. He claimed he had "the interests of the students" in mind and wanted to know what the union contract would cost as he feared residence rates might go up. Councillor Ray van Eenoghe countered that CUPE hadn't asked how much they'd be paying in taxes when it supported the fee strike aims of lowering tuition fees and gave funds for buses to take protesting students to Queen's Park. The Glendon Student Union also endorsed the union's position.

The union, in its demands, is also seeking a prohibition of outside non-union workers. Last year, the administration looked into contracting out for the new administrative studies building, but found the plan wouldn't save any money.

FEES MORATORIUM TODAY



York president David Slater met with students in occupied territory Friday to explain the administration's reversal on the release of OSAP cheques. Slater said the government gave the go-ahead.

Students call off classes for fee strike discussions

York students have called for a moratorium on classes today as they attempt to move to a broader base of action in the province-wide fees strike.

The moratorium, endorsed Tuesday night by the York student federation, is supposed to be a day-long session with speakers and seminars. Premier Bill Davis and Jack McNie minister of colleges and universities, were invited to defend the government's view on post-secondary education. Other speakers include representatives from the New Democratic Party, the Ontario Federation of Labour, and York's administration, faculty and support staff.

Seminars on the financing of post-secondary education and the student movement are scheduled for this afternoon. Later today, there's to be a meeting to discuss tactics and strategy for the fees strike and a mass meeting to endorse proposals.

This week's action follows a two-day occupation which ended Friday. The occupation of the awards office began when the York administration

refused to release student award cheques without first deducting tuition fees. Some 3,000 students out of 13,000 at York and Glendon were affected and unable to choose whether or not they wished to take part in the fees strike against loan and tuition fee hikes.

While 20-30 students sat in the awards office, York president David Slater conferred with the government and agreed Friday to release

unconditionally both undergraduate and graduate cheques. The cheques were originally held on the grounds of a 1969 government directive, but Slater claimed McNie reversed his stand Friday and said the universities could release the cheques.

Slater also lifted all fines for late payment for this term. The maximum fine is \$10. According to a 1970 senate resolution, York has no academic penalties for late payment. In meeting student demands, Slater refused to a third request: that the administration endorse the aims of the fee strike through a public statement. Students at York first said they would continue to occupy until that demand was met, but later agreed they should direct their energies in getting mass-based support for the fees strike.

A steering committee was formed, and it drew up initial moratorium day plans over the week-end. The York cutbacks committee has also been circulating a petition to get signed student support.

Who pays?

Who's paying their fees? There's no official count yet, according to York accounting officials, but there certainly isn't a total strike picture, either.

The deadline for paying fees was Monday, but the accounting department said that as of last Wednesday, more people had paid their fees than at the same time last year. But the spokesman said that number was small as few students pay before the deadline.