

editorial

Scars 'n' strikes

Although the CUEW strike we've all been complaining about now seems to be over, York will now have to face the consequences: bitterness between faculty and administration, professors and students, and a massive academic backlog.

The worst aspect of the strike is that it need not have happened at all, and even when it had begun it could have ended much sooner than it did. CUEW had been negotiating for almost half a year before the strike, giving the administration plenty of time to draw up realistic counter-proposals to the union's demands. Instead, the university negotiating team failed to move on their first wage offer.

Also, as recently as last week, when faced with the practical suggestion by CUEW's negotiating team to seek binding arbitration, the administration's team refused. Worse, according to CUEW Internal Vice-President Terry Conlin, they gave no reason—just a flat "no."

For both sides to submit to binding arbitration would have been an honorable and practical solution to the strike that has caused so much strife in the university community. But that's supposing the administration and York's Board of Governors wanted an honorable solution. Judging from their past actions, that doesn't seem too likely.

In their dealings this year with YUFA (the faculty union), YUSA (the support staff union), and CUEW, the administration has consistently followed a policy of political brinkmanship, pushing the unions to their limits before making a single counter-offer.

During the YUFA negotiations, the university made their only realistic offer only hours before the faculty union was due to walk out. Faced with an almost total shutdown of the university, the administration finally backed down.

In the case of YUSA, it took a week-long strike to force a settlement, even though YUSA's demands were by far the most modest of the three major unions on campus.

The central question in all three cases is, why didn't the university negotiate seriously in the first place, instead of waiting until strikes or near strikes disrupted the campus?

This way no one wins, except possibly an administration more intent on union busting than looking after the best interests of students and the university in general.

Yes, you're absolutely right, Dr. Found, Mr. Farr, et al: it is always the students who suffer.

Now why didn't you do something about it before they had to?

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—Wilfred H. Kesterton
The Law and the Press in Canada



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letters

Photo choice inappropriate

Editor:
I'm writing in regards to the photograph of the children strikers for peace in the October 25th issue. Not only is the sing the children carry offensive, but it seems contradictory to the cause. Peace will only be achieved through peaceful measures, this includes words of peace not hostility. Excalibur, who has in the past taken a supportive approach to the peace movement, should have chosen a more appropriate photograph for the article. The children carrying the "We Choose to Live" sign would be more effective for all concerned in the peace movement.

—Wendy Ward and Ann McCurdy

Tory support undeserved

Editor:
As a York University student, suffering through cutbacks, fee increases and two strikes, I am outraged at the provincial government's attitude toward its universities. Why is Premier Davis reported to be at the height of his popularity, while strangling the educational system?

The Toronto Star reported (on October 25) that the Davis government plans to "shave increases" on hospital and education spending in order to maintain an international credit rating. The loss of the top Triple-A rating would have a minuscule effect on this province—but would be a symbolic loss for the Ontario government. The Tories obviously care more about foreign markets than the hundreds of thousands of students in their own province.

They have done nothing to end either the York strikes (now in its third week) nor the province-wide community college one. The reputation of higher education in Ontario (which, ironically, Bill Davis built when he presided over the post-secondary expansion as the minister

of education in the late '60s and early '70s) will be a pathetic laughing stock to the people of Canada after this year.

With an election on the horizon, now is the time to hope that the "Big Blue Machine" and the Tories' undeserved popularity runs out of gas.

—Joy Eskin

End strike now

Editor:
On behalf of of the Student Senate Caucus we would like to convey the following stance to the Administration, CUEW, and Students of York University. We feel, as an elected body of student representatives, whose mandate concerns the academic standards and policy of York University, that this current strike by CUEW should be concluded NOW. It is our view that if an agreement cannot be reached in the near future, BOTH parties of the bargaining unit should engage BINDING ARBITRATION. In realization of the effects of the YUSA strike, compounded by the CUEW strike, considerable class time has been lost. The loser in both cases has been the student.

It is the responsibility of the SSC to ensure that the academic integrity of York University be maintained for students. It is with this in mind that we suggest strong action be taken. It is not our intention to recommend a preference for either side and this statement should not be misinterpreted as such. It is our purpose here, rather to express our DISGUST and FRUSTRATION with the current situation as it affects students.

—The Student Senate Caucus
Of York University

Sacred union

Editor:
The strike by CUEW members is now in its 14th day, and it is fascinating to hear, 1) CUEW members who cross CUEW picket lines, 2) CYSF and the administration and, 3) members of faculty pontificate in self-righteous union about their "sacred trust" and of their students as "innocent

victims." Their remarks are almost invariably prefaced by attacks on CUEW heretics, or "unionization."

Faculty members tend to appeal to the religious "sacred trust" metaphor: of some timeless, other-worldly relationship. They speak of their presence at the podium as if it were a sacramental rite performed in a sanctuary far and above the world of crass material considerations. They are now faced with a rebellion among their underfunded acolytes, a rebellion which is spreading to the neophytes!

But their relation to students is indeed distant and other-worldly, for students with TAS certainly realize that their primary opportunity for a real interaction, for a human relation in the class room, is with the latter and not with these pious incarnations. (One might also switch to the Feudal metaphor and discover the meaning of professorial tenure in its most defensive and corrupted form. And I think of the Wizard of Id with the strange, comic juxtaposition of peasants unionizing the Domain. The real point is: which side is inappropriately present?)

It is wonderful to behold how these same pious priests, or their worldly counterparts, effortlessly slip into the administrative role which appeals to that same materialism they condemn in the pulpit. This secular, or profane, role attempts to neutralize the quality of education factors CUEW strives after.

We witness CYSF stage a pseudo-conflict with the administration by applying the wage-commodity relation to class time: "Missed Classes Money Back" declares a CYSF advertisement in last week's Excalibur. They care not a whit, by the way, for the quality of the product.

The quality of education, CUEW argues, is not simply the quality of the individual teacher: it is the ability of students to interact, to criticize and exchange ideas in their tutorial sessions; tutorial class sizes therefore, should be based upon the principle of optimal interaction.

—Bill Martin,
Senate Representative,
Graduate Student Association