

Dal employees lose again

The attempt by the Canadian Union of Public employees to organize the non-academic staff of this university is long overdue. The secretaries and technicians here are paid less than the maintenance staff, although they have a better education.

For years they neglected to organize themselves and yet often complained because the unions were helping other groups to gain concessions from management. At long last throughout the Maritimes, these people are demanding some sort of organization to represent them. CUPE, a huge, well-organized, totally Canadian union is ready to act for these employees. Yet they are waffling. Here at Dal the people concerned are afraid to have a proven, strong union represent them and instead are willing to compromise with an association which the administration admits failed to work some years ago.

Even the president of the Staff Association, Tony Nicholas, admits that the organization will not be performing much more than social functions for the next six months or a year. How much benefit will this be to the employees when the organization will, as Nicholas stated, "try to maintain friendly relations with Dalhousie"?

Why are the workers willing to allow an organization, which admits that it is inexperienced, to handle their demands? Why, when CUPE is able to do so immediately and more effectively?

This, of course, is totally acceptable to the Board of Governors of Dal. In this case they are the equivalent to the "management" and as such want a group that they can control — one that will not be strong enough to set demands and back them up if not granted. This Staff Association does not have either the experience or the organization to be nearly as effective as CUPE.

The ones that will suffer for this lack of foresight are, of course, the secretaries and other non-academic employees at Dal. Their association will no doubt get a few token concessions from the administration, but this is wasted effort that serves only to confuse the issue and delude people into thinking that they are actually gaining ground. However, if the group ever decides to make strong demands for better wages, benefits and working conditions, then they would see

Staff

Association

VS

CUPE

that they are not strong enough to battle a multi-million dollar corporation like Dalhousie University.

CUPE could do this if the employees would stop following the dark and take the opportunity to talk to CUPE officials and find out what they are bound to lose through this association — an association which is not representative of anywhere near a majority of the non-academic workers. (The figures are 195 out of 700.)

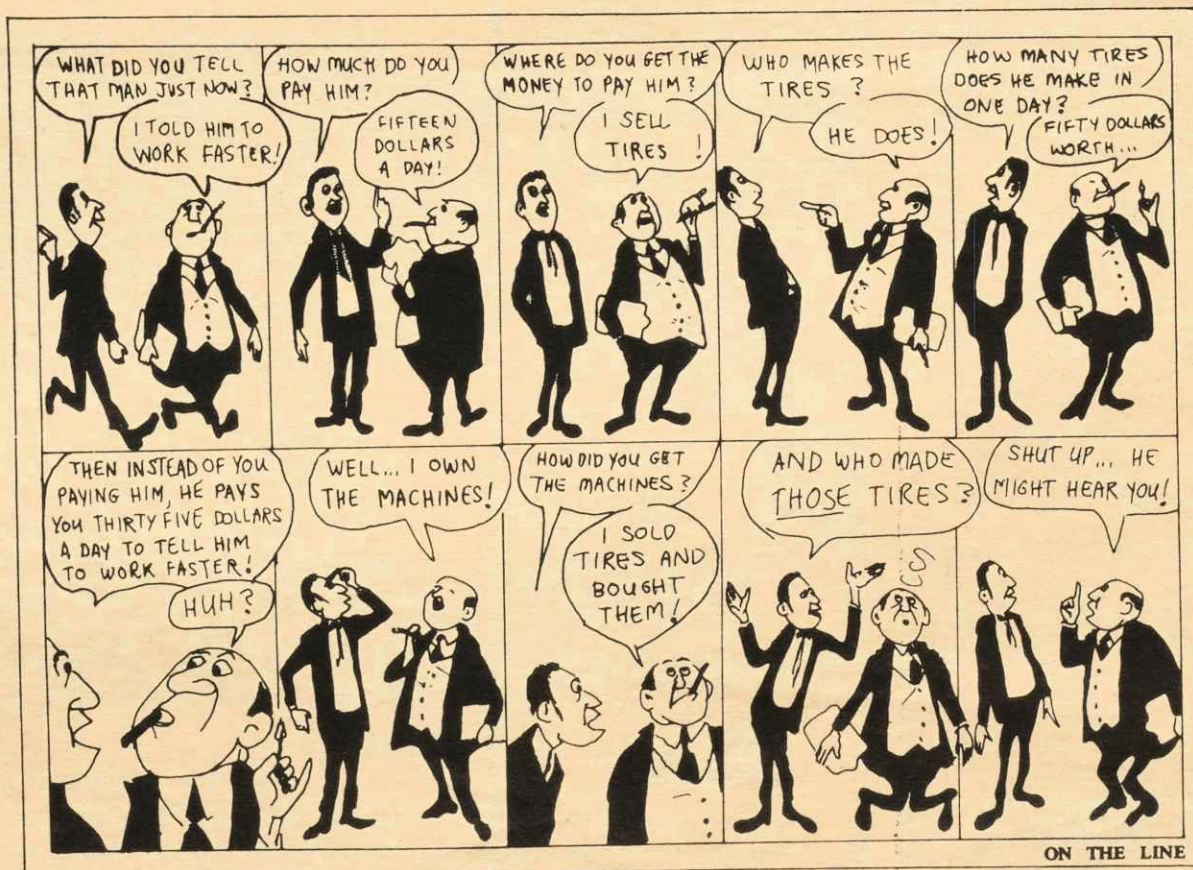
The fact that the Board of Governors was willing to ratify this association without making a serious preliminary investigation into the amount of support it commanded and the plans (or lack of them) that it had for the future is strikingly indicative of where the employees of this university stand in the eyes of the administration. They are not concerned with removing the archaic working standards from this campus, but only with getting as much as possible with little effort.

The solution lies with the people who stand to lose the most through all this — the employees themselves. Those who are not in favor of the Staff Association must get together and demand that the Board of Governors withdraw its ratification as an illegal and grossly negligent action.

Those who agreed to join this organization must realize that they are only harming their fellow workers AND themselves by supporting something which is bound to fail. They must demand to know what Tony Nicholas and the rest of the association executive plan to do for (and possibly against) them. They must decide if they are going to make a strong stand for their working rights.

Then there must be an open forum with representatives of CUPE and the Staff Association, with all concerned employees present. Thus the advantages and disadvantages of both organizations will be there for all to see and the myths that have been circulated by some people to serve their own ends will be destroyed.

Most important of all, the students of this university and their representatives (the Student Union) must concern themselves with the problems facing these employees. We must stop hiding from such issues, and help the people who maintain our ivory tower through taxes.



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Editor: Dorothy Wigmore 424-2507
Advertising Manager: Jim Tesoriere
General Calls: 424-2350
Room 334 — Student Union Bldg.