

UNIVERSITY NEWSBEAT

Prepared by the Communications Department, S 802 Ross, 667-3441

University Statement on Strike

Negotiations between the York University Staff Association and the University were resumed last Saturday under the supervision of a senior mediator assigned by the Ministry of Labour. During the weekend sessions as a result of new initiatives taken by the University agreement was reached on all contract clauses covering the "job security" issues which had been identified by YUSA as their major concerns:

- impact of layoffs
- technological change
- supervisors' performance of 'bargaining unit work'
- contracting out

YUSA had already accepted, the previous weekend, a University proposal concerning 'work of a personal nature'.

The University has, therefore, met YUSA's concerns in those areas which YUSA has said are of greatest concern to it.

YUSA has continued to insist, however, that nearly all of its other demands also be met. On the major issue of salary increments, YUSA reduced its demand from 10% to 9% or \$900. As a result of this attitude, the mediator was forced to adjourn negotiations.

In view of YUSA's change of position as to its main priorities, the University finds it necessary to publish this statement in response to a steady stream of publicity supporting YUSA and ignoring the financial realities facing the University. That publicity has included many seriously distorted claims which deserve correction if the York community is to have an accurate perspective on this labour dispute.

• It has been reported that York received a 5.8% increase in operating funds this year. That is not correct. The Ontario universities as a whole did receive an increase of 5.8% in grants. York's increase in total income

from fees and grants is only 4.2%, because of decreases in tuition fee income and special grants.

• 1977-78 salary increments were for only part of the 1977-78 budget year. A large part of York's new income for 1978-79 had to be allocated to pick up the full year cost of salary increments already agreed to in 1977-78. Inflation created large cost increases in non-salary areas such as heating fuel and books.

• Enrolment at York is not up this year. A forecast was made that total enrolment would decline by about 3%. So far, this estimate appears to be accurate.

• The oft-repeated claims that "the University has the money" are simply not true, and the many, many members of the York community who participated in the extended budgeting process last year or have read York's recently published and audited financial statement know that to be the case. Full data with accompanying texts have been published in a variety of campus publications during the past months. It is difficult to understand how anyone who participated in last year's march on Queen's Park to protest severe financial cutbacks can believe that "there are pots of gold hidden around the University". Base budget cuts of \$3.8 million had to be made in order to provide salary increments of 4% plus corresponding adjustments to existing fringe benefits. To offer more would mean more program cuts, more positions lost, fewer services. Each 1% increment for all of York's employee groups costs \$515,000 in the 1978-79 budget year alone; additional full-year costs would have to be met in 1979-80. Cuts in programs and services necessary to produce even an additional 1% would be extremely

damaging, even if possible at this time of year.

• The provincial government has not only reduced current financial support to universities, but has also made it clear that we should not expect improvement. The province has also made it clear that it will not underwrite University deficits.

• Funding for such facilities as the Tennis Complex and the Track and Field Project now under construction are provided by external sources. York provides only the land and a share of maintenance costs (which we recover through rentals).

It is important that the York community understand that the University budgeted 4% salary increments in order to maintain programs, services and jobs. Further salary increments cannot be entertained without further serious and continuing cuts.

York University regrets the serious inconveniences caused to all members of the community by this disruption of services. We are attempting to continue as many services as possible and while it would be inaccurate to suggest we are operating at normal levels most faculties report over 90 per cent of their classes are being taught by faculty and attended by students.

We will attempt to resolve this strike as soon as possible and ensure our students that everything within our power will be done to see that any class time lost will be made up before the end of the academic year. But it is the opinion of the Board of Governors and the University Senior Policy Committee (which includes all Deans of Faculties) that to meet all YUSA demands, considering the ramifications for the University, would not be in the best interest of any member of our community.