

# Loosening the noose

OTTAWA (CUP)—A recent loosening of one of the unemployment insurance restrictions announced last month is merely a federal government ploy, according to a spokesperson for the Ottawa Coalition for Full Employment.

"It's a common ploy to make a proposal more severe and then loosen it a bit," Steve Jelly said October 11.

"But it takes attention away from the real question—that, in a time of phenomenally

high unemployment, the government is tightening unemployment insurance requirements."

Among the restrictions announced September 1 by Employment and Immigration Minister Bud Cullen was a provision that those claimants who have already collected UI benefits in the previous year must work at least as many weeks as they collected benefits before being allowed to reapply.

But, in response to criticism from the opposition and from Liberal MPs from the Atlantic provinces, Cullen said October 10 that that requirement would be loosened.

Some workers would be able to claim benefits after not working the full number of weeks that requirement called for, he said, although not all workers would be eligible.

He did not say what criteria would determine eligibility.

Cullen said the intent of the change was to "back off on the severity of the impact" of the restriction on seasonal workers, particularly in the Atlantic.

The restriction had been criticized by NDP unemployment critic John Rodrigues (Nicel Belt), who charged it would disqualify 75 percent of Newfoundland's fishermen from receiving UI benefits.

According to Jelly, the Ottawa Coalition is not satisfied with the change and will not be satisfied until the qualifying period for UI benefits is reduced to its previous level of eight weeks from its current level of ten to fourteen weeks.

The Coalition had previously criticized the restrictions as "an attack on the rights of the working and unemployed people".

It said the federal government was "attempting to place the victims of the unemployment crisis in a position of having to pay an even higher price for the government's economic mismanagement".

## Carleton staff

# Another strike

OTTAWA (CUP)—A fourth support staff strike at a Canadian post-secondary institution this term is almost certain.

The support staff at Carleton University will go out on strike October 18 unless university negotiators "make a more responsible offer", according to union negotiator Keith Alnwick.

"We're not prepared to compromise our basic position. If by the 18th the university has not seen fit to make a reasonable offer, we will be forced to take action."

An emergency meeting requested by the university was held October 12 in a last-ditch attempt to avert a possible strike by the 650 union members. The meeting's outcome was unknown at press time.

Negotiations between the union and the university broke down October 4 when university negotiators refused the union's demands for an 11.8% wage hike. Union support for strike action increased fol-

lowing the university's refusal, said Alnwick.

"The (union) council has chosen to exercise the September 28 strike vote extended. The feeling is one of disgust at the university's last offer," he said.

Although academic vice president Ab Larose would not say whether Carleton planned to meet the union's wage demands, he hinted the university would present a new wage offer.

"I presume we'll both be presenting new offers," he said.

The union's membership includes all non-teaching personnel except for some administrative staff and maintenance workers. University officials are now uncertain whether a support staff strike would result in the university's shutdown.

"Our hope is to remain open. Goodness knows, we've never had experience with this kind of situation before. We'll just have to wait and see," Larose said.

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## At Carleton university

# Death in tunnels

OTTAWA (CUP)—Asbestos dust from the insulation in a section of Carleton University is damaging the health of students and staff, according to a Carleton professor in environmental geology.

Patrick Hill said anyone using the tunnels is breathing asbestos dust falling from the insulation.

People should avoid tunnels as the asbestos dust is most likely in the air, he said.

He said a paint covering the asbestos insulation is crumbling and the insulation is hanging loosely in places. He said asbestos is disturbed by passing people and golf carts, causing small fibres to break off and float in the air.

Asbestos causes two diseases, scarring of lung tissues called asbestosis and a form of lung cancer called mesothelioma. The amount of fibre in the air is not a prime concern—the fact that there are any fibres at all presents a health hazard.

A Health and Welfare Canada report published by its asbestos working group in 1976 said that any amount can cause cancer.

Hill said Carleton should close the tunnels until a fresh coat of sealant is applied to prevent further contamination.

Director of the physical plant, Jim Whenam, said the

tunnels were coated with limpet, a fibrous material containing asbestos.

"Limpet has fallen in dis-favour because of the health concern over it, so I don't think anyone uses it anymore," he said.

Whenam said that health inspectors "seem not to be concerned that it is there." However, he said that to his knowledge, there had never been an air test to determine the amount of dust.

If the asbestos proved to be a health hazard, it would be replaced by other materials, said Whenam. He said there were plans to refinish the tunnels in the future but it was not a high priority.

Hill said because no one has noticed the danger is no reason to think it does not exist.

Wives of asbestos miners have developed asbestosis from breathing asbestos dust when washing their husbands' clothes, he said.

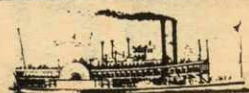
Although Hill said he knows of no cancer linked to the dust in Carleton's tunnels he suspects cases exist.

"Someone should make a study of the number of professors who have died," he said.

For more information on the dangers of asbestos see Atlantic Issues inside.



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