

Strike averted

Staff settles at eleventh hour

Lydia Pawlenko and Sue Bruce
Last Friday, members of the York University Staff Association (YUSA) voted to accept the administration's wage offer, sparing students from a repeat of last year's chaotic strike which disrupted York for weeks.

About 600 union members calmly filled Curtis Lecture Hall I to vote 95 percent in favor of a package including improvements to O.H.I.P. and dental coverage, retraining for technological change, internal job posting and personal leave policies.

Negotiations between YUSA and the university began in June, but eventually broke off after only four meetings. YUSA was aiming for an 11.5 percent increase and was dissatisfied with the wage increase and uneven pay scaling among its ranks.

With neither side willing to compromise, YUSA was forced to apply for conciliation with the Ministry of Labor.

library fund or scholarships, in order to make up for the inevitable losses the quality of education would suffer as a result of a strike.

Many union members felt it was last year's strike combined with the university's \$1.4 million surplus that won them such a favorable contract. "The university knows that we are willing and able to use the strike weapon," a secretary commented.

Still, other union members felt the administration agreed to the contract in order to save embarrassment of dealing with labor disputes.

Many YUSA members believe they could earn higher wages in the private sector. However, as one staff person commented, "We have to realize that there is a kind of tradeoff. What we often lose in wages we gain in free academic courses and the privilege of spending eight hours a day in a learning environment."



Stong Lake provided a quiet place for this bookworm.

Gary Hershorn

Talks break off

At the beginning of August talks halted to a deadlock.

The university administration broke off talks. According to YUSA President Lauma Avens, "The chief negotiator for the university, Donald Mitchell, only moves under pressure. The only effective pressure is the union's right to withdraw services."

By the end of the month YUSA members had voted 76 percent in favor to fight for a better contract. Mediation was reached and the union was in a legal position to strike on September 6. YUSA and the administration finally agreed on an 8.7 percent wage increase.

"It is a good contract with a decent wage," claimed Lauma Avens, who felt the settlement was a victory for the union. She expressed pride in YUSA members and stressed their willingness to fight for a decent contract and to stand behind their executive showed, "a lot of courage and gutsiness."

W. D. Farr, Vice-president in charge of employee and student relations, expressed the university administration's contentment with the deal. "I thought it was a fair and satisfactory settlement."

Pro-student stance

The CYSF shifted from last year's pro-union stance to a pro-student stance, opting to ensure students are provided with the education they paid for.

"Labour disputes are not our bag," explained CYSF president Keith Smockum. "We wanted an academic environment conducive to education. If they can't give that, they should hold back fees."

Smockum stressed, "The people who would have been beat the most would have been the students." In the event of a staff strike, the CYSF would have taken actions to discourage a "generic education". They were prepared to pressure faculty councils to postpone classes, and to donate any money saved to a

\$1.4 million surplus

York budget out of balance

Hugh Westrup

Suspicion within the York community of the practices of university budget planners was heightened this summer with the discovery of a \$1.4 million surplus in York's financial accounts.

The surplus was left over from last year's budget which originally had been pared by \$3.8 million.

The announcement of the surplus shocked many since it so closely followed the latest round of painful budget cutting which reduced this year's budget by \$1.9 million.

"The net effect of the surplus has been a dishonest stand on the part of the administration in demanding cuts when a large surplus was building," says Al Stauffer, chairperson of the York Faculty Association.

According to George Bell, executive vice-president and a key figure in computing the York budget, the surplus resulted from additional income and underspending by various departments.

"It was a coincidence of a series of things," says Bell. "Restraint, energy savings, good investment rates."

Bell, whose budget forecasts are generally thought to be less than optimistic, insists the surplus was not due to any underestimation of income on his part. Similarly, he said there was no way of his knowing the faculties were going to spend less money than predicted.

"We only learn about faculty expenditures after the year has closed—in late May or early June," said Bell.

Still, there are those who doubt Bell's claims.

Says Stauffer, "I think it should have been obvious to Bell, that a surplus was accruing. He's budget officer, he has access to

monthly reports on spending. If he is competent he would have seen the difference in how spending was going.

All the time the surplus was building the university was looking at ways of cutting from this year's budget."

The community-at-large was not informed of the surplus until the July 30 issue of the York

Gazette. By then the money had been allocated to York's operating debt and funding a number of "new initiatives."

The distribution occurred in late June, about one month after Bell says he realized the full extent of the surplus. Money was allocated based on suggestions for new programs that President Macdonald had been collecting

from the faculties since January.

Stauffer believes there was inadequate consultation done prior to the allocation of the money.

"Money was given out on the basis of previous submissions without consideration whether the cuts should be restored. It was done in haste without proper planning."

Lone parents dispute loans

A newly-formed student group is fighting a move by the Ontario government to disqualify single parent students who receive family benefits from receiving Ontario student loans.

The Family Benefit Student Group has already won one battle with the province in July. William Clarkson, director of the province's students awards branch, reversed a decision to limit family benefit recipients to only \$1,000 of a possible \$1,800 in loans available to students last year, for a total of \$3,600.

Clarkson claimed the disqualification was necessary because single parents were getting more money than they knew how to handle.

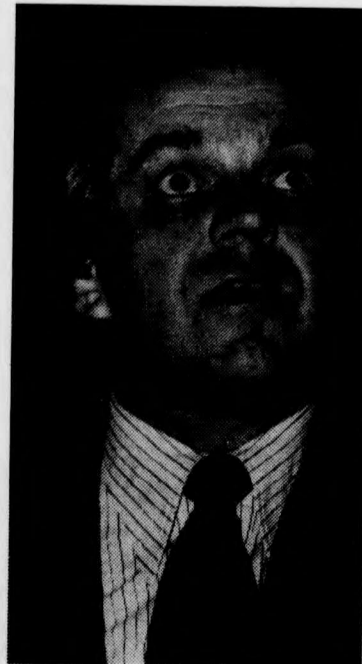
"This presented a problem in that when these large amounts of money came into the family benefit recipients' hands, some of them had never seen that much money before and spent it really without any thought being given to the consequences of paying it back," he said.

But Clarkson's own staff denied there were any cases of abuse of the program by family benefit recipients and his remarks angered the student

group and the Ontario Federation of Students.

"It's a student right to utilize those loans," says Moira Bertrand, a spokesperson for the Family Benefit Student Group.

Figures compiled by the Metro Toronto Social Planning Council show that a single parent with only one child needs \$7,600 annually, while family benefits only provide \$4,700.



Ed Broadbent

on:
Petrocan

Fri. Sept. 14th
at 12:00

Curtis Lecture Hall "A"

Presented by the York Student
Federation