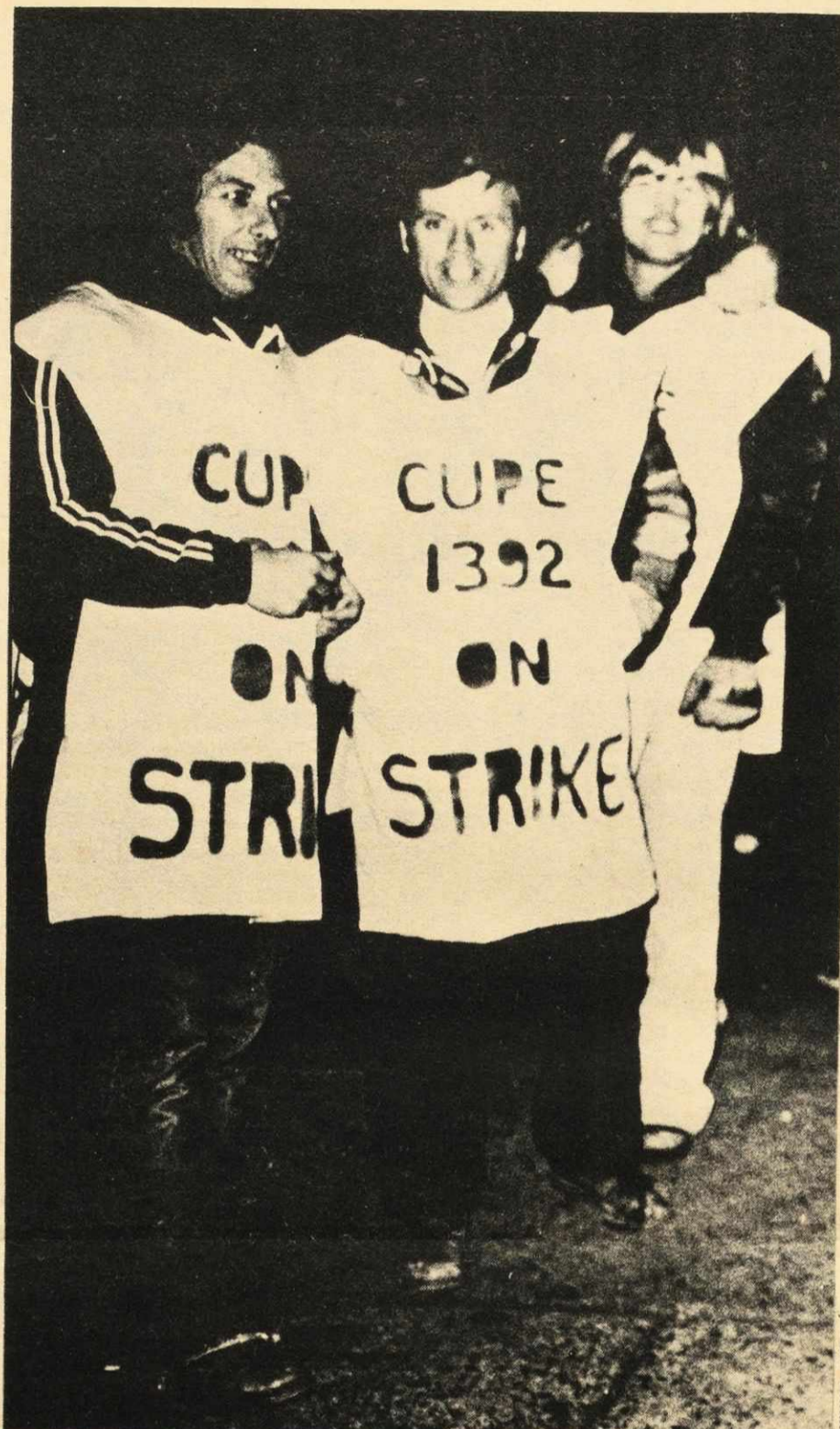


Contract History

Background

- Dalhousie cleaners certified as CUPE 1392, in September, 1971.
- Between 1971 and 1975, several contracts signed between CUPE 1392 and the Administration are settled without necessity of conciliation; however, wage settlements are generally very low.
- In January 1976, CUPE cleaners vote to strike because of threat by Anti-Inflation Board to cut back the agreement reached between them and the Administration. Strike is averted when the Administration promises "... to support the Collective Agreement in its entirety." (Dal Gazette, 7 October '76)
- Cutbacks in staff begin in March, 1976. The university administration begins reducing the cleaning staff from 290 down to 180 full-time staff (later to be upped to 230). Fewer people are now responsible for the same amount of work; morale sinks as pressure to increase work intensifies.
- Wages of CUPE cleaners are rolled back in September 1976 by Anti-Inflation Board. The cleaners are forced to pay back approximately \$53,000 to the university. The majority of cleaners are left with an increase below the Statistics Canada poverty line.
- CUPE cleaners take a second strike vote in March 1977. They vote 81% in favor of a strike after the Administration reverses its position on sick leave and outside contractors. A strike is averted by a compromise.
- A one year agreement is signed between the cleaners and the Administration, beginning September 1, 1977, giving light cleaners \$3.72 hourly (\$3.82 after April 1) up to heavy cleaners \$4.44 (\$4.54 after April 1). This is the last agreement made under the AIB guidelines. This agreement is signed in March 1978, only after cleaners voted 89% to strike.
- Meanwhile, the Dalhousie Operating Engineers go out on a two week strike in November-December 1977 to back demands for higher wages and no outside contractors. They win most of their demands, but not before the Administration got an injunction to limit picketing. The support for the strike by students, faculty and staff is credited as being crucial to winning the demands that were won.
- CUPE cleaners agreement expires 31 August 1978. Negotiations with Administration begin in October. Agreement is reached on some secondary issues. But on wages, an enormous gap. CUPE originally asks for raise of \$2.00 hourly on a one year contract, bringing cleaners up to national industrial wage average. Eventually, they lower their demand for one of parity with Operating Engineers settlement (\$.85 an hour) on one year contract. Administration offers \$.40 an hour for first year and \$.25 an hour for second year of two year contract.
- CUPE membership rejects Administration's wage offer, and also rejects idea of two year contract. Re-affirms \$.85 an hour demand.
- Administration counters by offering \$.31 an hour on one year contract.
- Conciliation breaks down October 13, 1978. With no further negotiations, CUPE membership votes 126-33 (79%) on October 25 to strike in order to break demands.
- On November 2, the Operating Engineers voted at a membership meeting to support CUPE and not to do CUPE's duties. The same day, the Dalhousie Staff Association executive also expresses its support for the cleaners and urges its members to support CUPE by not doing the cleaners' work.
- The next day, the executive of the Dalhousie Staff Association expresses support for CUPE's demands and requests its members not to do the duties normally done by CUPE cleaners.
- On Sunday, November 5, the Student's Council hears both Al Cunningham, CUPE representative, and University Vice-President Louis-Vagianos. Council votes to remain neutral; however, their resolution allows full-time student union management to clean up the SUB.
- That Sunday night, at 11 p.m., the cleaners go out on strike. Pickets go up at 26 sites around the university.



Strikers story

Simon Sampson, Garth Wittacker and Frances Greenough are all employees of CUPE 1392 at Dalhousie. Last Saturday they visited the Gazette office for an informal chat about the strike and their jobs at Dalhousie with Gazette staffers Alan Adams and Elissa Barnard.

Gazette: What does your job involve?

Garth: We work as caretaker and we do everything from cleaning the classrooms to stripping and waxing floors, vacuuming carpets, just about everything except maintenance work, which is plumbing and stuff of that nature.

Frances: For me it's mostly vacuuming and emptying garbage, doing the floors, cleaning the showers and the locker room.

Gazette: What are your working conditions like?

Garth: All the buildings are under-staffed. That's one of the bigger complaints and nobody on the administration wants to hire anybody. If I'm short a person at the Arts Centre and post for a heavy duty cleaner or light duty, whatever it may be, you'll transfer someone from the men's side or something like that. They're going from A to B but we're not getting any help.

Gazette: What's the main issue of the strike?

Simon: Money.

Gazette: How much are you making?

Simon: I'd say around \$8000.00 under that. It's somewhere between \$7500. and \$8000. That's before everything is taken out, before your income tax, unemployment, Canada Pension Plan, union dues, the Cross, anything. You name it. So you're home with \$5,000 if you're lucky. I don't know, Frances makes less than the men do.

Frances: \$3.82 per hour. I take home \$218.41 every two weeks, close to \$109.00 per week by the time they take everything off.

Gazette: Where does your money go?

Simon: Well, just figure it out. You're paying rent, the rent's high. Then you've got the fuel bill, the grocery bills and other things you have to pay in order to keep things going. By the time you've finished how much do you have left? There just isn't enough for what you want.

Let's face it, the rents are going higher and higher and the food—you go to a store today, you don't get much food for the money you have. You can't afford to eat every week.

Living on the line

You can look around and see what the cheap stuff is. I'd like to see the administration try and live on what they are offering. They'd never do it. Seven per cent, seven per cent, you can't live on seven per cent. I'd like to see Mr. Hicks live on seven per cent. I'd take seven per cent of what he makes and then maybe I could live. You know, you just look at it today. It's not hard to see what's going on. I mean everything is going up. We don't have enough money. We just can't keep up with it. It's terrible when people have to suffer like this. I'd like to have another car. I'm driving an old car right now and I can't afford a new one. I have a child in junior high and it takes a lot of money to keep a child in school. And I don't think it's fair that the child will suffer. It's just that the administration doesn't understand how hard the other people live.

Gazette: Has your life style suffered from inflation eating into your wages?

Garth: We never go out. We may go to the odd wedding or something like that but other than that we can't afford to go out. A show is \$4.00, after that who can afford popcorn? I have a house we bought three years ago and with the both of us working we're doing alright but it's taking both of our salaries. We could have never bought a house if it was only me working, because you're talking about the insurance on your home, fire insurance, furniture insurance. Oil is 60c a gallon now.

Simon: You have to suffer, I think, with the money we are making. You have to cut down, you're thinking can I afford to do this or can I afford to buy this and there is no way you should be living this kind of life. I just bought a new home 2 years ago and I can't afford to buy a new fridge. I just have to do with what I have. My furniture is falling apart. There isn't enough money.

Vagianos continually sounds like he's a record with a skip—"seven percent, seven percent, seven percent"—that's all he continues to say. He's stuck in that gear...

Gazette: Will the raise make much of a difference?

Garth: It would be an extra \$8.00 per day. You wouldn't walk home with \$80.00 over a 10 day period but if you had \$50.00 it would be a big help I think.

Gazette: What about the money the university is offering you?

Simon: It's nothing after deductions. **Garth:** You're talking \$24.00 for a two week period, a \$12.00 a week increase of your wages and remember you might take home \$7.00 per week of that if you are lucky. It's a slap in the face, that's what it is.

Frances: You'd be in a different income tax bracket and you might take home \$2.00 and you might not.

Garth: When I started working here 12 years ago I was making 85c an hour. We had to work six days a week then, it was a compulsory six day work week. We worked from Monday to Saturday and we never got ahead, or got sick benefits or anything like that, because we never had a union. And I think after two years they gave us an extra nickel and our wages went up to 90c per hour. I saved for two years to buy a winter coat. As a matter of fact I never had a winter jacket, I used to wear a hunting jacket. Awful generous of the university to do that.

Gazette: Why is the university paying you so poorly? They say they have no money.

Simon: I can't see why they can't give us the money. That's the only way we are going to live. If we can't get the money we'll have to work part-time at night to keep things going and I don't think it's fair.

Garth: They keep saying year after year that they have no money. They probably have the second or third largest endowment in Canada, \$30 or \$40 million don't they? They are willing to put up buildings all over the South End of the city. They just want to keep us on our knees and that's it.

Simon: The only way things are going to change is when you get rid of Vagianos. (Vice-President, Administration) He's got to go. When he's gone, things might change around here. As long as you've got that—I shouldn't say the word—thing around here this place won't change.

Frances: I don't feel it's fair to the students, they're paying a lot to come here and I wouldn't want it to happen to my son. I'm glad he's not going to Dal.

Gazette: Do any of the strikers have part-time jobs to keep up?

Garth: Yeah, a lot of people have part-time jobs, they have no other choice. Some of the kids don't even know what their fathers and mothers look like. Once and awhile on the weekend they're home unless they can pick up some money some other place.

Simon: I used to have a part-time job three years ago but I had to give it up because of taxes. I had to pay so much in taxes that I couldn't keep up with it, between working here and working at night. My wife and I used to work on cleaning contracts. At the end of the year my taxes were so high I wasn't making anything off it, so I just had to give it up. I'm thinking of going back to part-time if this

They'll try to put the blame on tuition increases next year which is a bunch of shit because they are going to raise your tuition regardless.

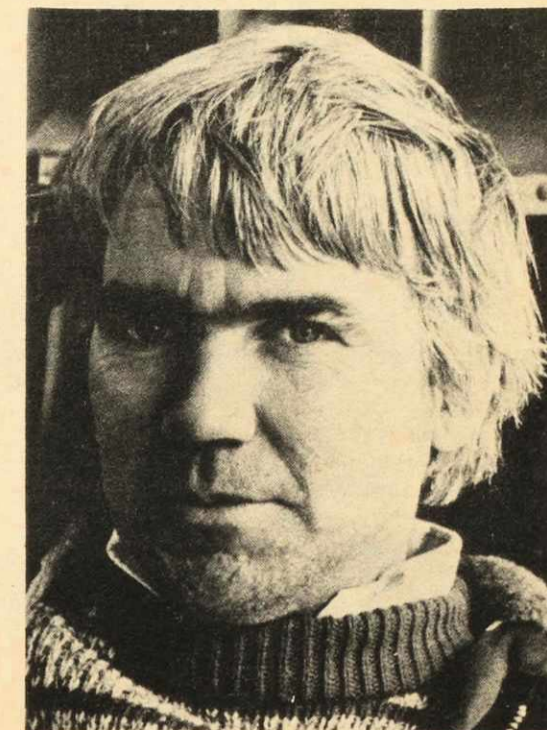
increase doesn't come through. But you have no time for your family. They end up being neglected.

Gazette: How are labour-management relations?

Garth: One to one they are pretty good, I'd say, but the resentment is that they don't know what the hell they are talking about when they're telling us to clean. I don't know how often they ever have been on their hands and knees scrubbing a floor. They come in and ask you to swing a mop and they don't know which end is supposed to go up or down. There are some things we'd like to get straightened out. The way they've been pushing people around. If they have a personal vendetta against somebody they really give him a hard time. There are little personal harassments like this going on.

Gazette: What do you think of the accusations about CUPE members sabotaging the campus?

Garth: Our members were told before we went



Simon: I'd like to see Mr. Hicks live on seven percent. I'd take seven percent of what he makes and then maybe I could live.

out on strike that we didn't want any of that kind of stuff. It's only turning things against us. The strike captains, every time they go on shift, emphasize this more and more because we know what's going on and that we're getting all the blame for everything that's been happening. The security that's on, they are not going into the buildings, everybody knows that. I don't know what the hell they are talking about. The same thing happened when the engineers were on strike last year. There was a lot of vandalism then, but then again there are a lot of outside campus people coming on campus and stuff.

Gazette: Do you think the situation could get bad enough for the university to close?

Garth: Well it could, I suppose, but the way it's working now with everybody doing our work, I don't think it's going to happen. Everybody is doing our work, from the Dalhousie Staff Association to the Dalhousie Faculty Association and everybody else. They are pressure tactics as far as I am concerned. They are threatening people that don't do our work, saying they're going to lose their jobs. Roger Jollimore (Coordinator Physical Plant) told the carpenters if they didn't do our work that he was going to fire them. And the union laws state that nobody can be fired for not doing another union's work. He's using strong arm tactics with these people. We know that the buildings are being closed and cleaned and they are making it fairly public.

Simon: I don't think it's fair that Dalhousie has to close. It's not fair to the students. Why should they suffer because we have to strike?

Simon: The students shouldn't have to suffer in this strike. The sooner we get this solved the better for us and the better for the students.

Frances: I'm sorry for the students that they're stuck in this predicament along with us and it must be hard on them.

Gazette: How are the negotiations right now?

Garth: No one's talking. They broke off last when we went out and there has been no talk since and it's going to stay like that as far as we know. Vagianos continually sounds like he's a record with a skip—"seven per cent, seven per cent, seven per cent," that's all he continues to say. He's stuck in that gear and we're going forward and we hope to get more.

Gazette: What do you think the future holds for you if things stay as they are?

Garth: Just continue to deteriorate. They have to go downhill, everything is going up and we are staying in limbo. They'll try to put the blame on tuition increases next year which is a bunch of shit because they are going to raise your tuition regardless. They continue to blame the labor here and you and I know that's not true. They have the money but are just money hungry. They don't want to give it out, Mr. Scrooge and Company.

Strike to date—A chronology of events -

Tuesday, November 7

- One of the strikers, Gilles Boudreau, is allegedly struck by a security vehicle attempting to cross picket lines.
- A driver of one of the university's mail trucks is transferred to another job after apparently threatening to run over some of the picketing cleaners.
- Two police cars escort Shore garbage service (private, non-unionized) trucks across picket line.

Wednesday, November 8

- A strike committee is formed. Made up of approximately 80 students, faculty and staff, it organizes to mobilize campus and community support through rallies, petitions, leaflets and by supporting the strikers' picket lines.

Thursday, November 9

- Police jostle with strikers as they lead garbage trucks through to the Tupper Medical Building.
- A trucker from Humphrey's Trucking (Dartmouth) allegedly threatens strikers with a switchblade if they don't move out of the way.
- School of Social Work votes not to do any of the cleaning normally done by the striking cleaners.
- Windows are broken at several places on the campus.

Friday, November 10

- Carpenters in the Operating Engineers Union are threatened with layoffs if they defy orders to do work which the union considers to be CUPE work.
- Law Society votes unanimously to support CUPE in their reasonable demands and urges

law students not to do any of the cleaners' work. Law Faculty narrowly passes a motion suggesting that no faculty help to do any of the major cleaning normally done by the strikers.

—Students and staff begin joining the strikers on the picket lines. The strike committee meets and agrees on pamphlets issued later that day.

—Later that night, police escort another Shore garbage truck across picket lines set up at the Cohn and Physical Plant, after cleaning has been done by supervisory personnel. Police meet resistance from about 12 picketers and are able to bring the truck in only with 8 policemen present, billy clubs in hand.

The weekend Saturday, November - Sunday, November

- Administration makes major attempts to clean up the university. Planning parties are organized by management. The SUB is closed for the weekend and closed. The Law Building is cleaned despite Fay's resolution. In addition, most of the university's major buildings were cleaned.
- Pickets are pulled off the Saturday night shift after beer, bibles, garbage and threats and insults are thrown at them, by person unknown.

Monday, November 13

- CBC moves its music festival from the John after several of its unionized drivers refuse to cross picket lines.

—Another strike support committee meeting. A rally for Friday, November 17 at the SUB at noon is agreed upon. As well, a petition campaign and increasing the number in information pamphlets is agreed upon.

—Late that night, a Shore garbage truck picked up garbage from the Law school, but was not able to force its way through pickets set up at the Cohn and Physical Plant.

Tuesday, November 14

—By now, about 3000 leaflets put out by the Strike support committee are distributed throughout campus and the first of the committee's strike bulletins are put out. Teams of students are organized to go to the residences

and Fenwick to explain what the strikers are asking for.

—The strike has begun to attract extensive media coverage. All the local radio and T.V. stations, along with local press are covering the issues daily. At a press conference Cunningham charges the Administration with widespread scabbing and points to the growing support from students, faculty and staff.

Wednesday, November 15

—In another interview that day, Cunningham points out that if CUPE accepts the Administration's offer of a 31c an hour increase, that would give the lowest paid cleaner a yearly salary of \$8590.00. The highest would receive \$10,088. The poverty line set by Statistics Canada is presently \$9500.00.