

editorial

Caught in crossfire

York's unions and the university's administration are once again flexing their muscles in their tri-annual contract tussles.

The situation is especially problematic for students who, while they agree with the aims of the strikes in principle, are angry because of obstacles the strikes are placing in their plans to get a quality education.

The ones likely to suffer most are the students.

Whatever union they belong to, the strikers will receive strike pay and experience the satisfaction of having at least some of their points seriously considered by the administration. But what does the student receive?

As one ponders the reasons for YUSA's strike, one can sympathize with their need for re-training, health and safety concerns, job security and wages. But should students support the union by not crossing the picket lines?

Students were asked to honor the picket lines by the pickets, and in an editorial by this paper last week. There is no way to estimate the numbers that did not cross the lines in support of YUSA.

Though student sympathy is understandable, is there not an innate dilemma for students in the entire situation.

A portion of student tuition fees goes toward paying staff salaries as well as contributing to the faculty and teaching assistants' salaries. Some people opposed to the strike argue that "we pay their salaries, they shouldn't be allowed to do this" because not only are the staff not working, but their strike led to the cancelling of a number of classes.

To some students this seems unfair. But isn't it also unfair that the only method in which YUSA could get their issues seriously considered by the administration was by exercising their right to strike? Caught between sympathy for the union and their wish to continue their studies, students are placed in a very unpleasant situation.

... SURVIVING ... THE ... STRIKES ...



letters

Mock politics

Editor:
It has come to my attention that college politics at York University are a bloody mockery. I feel I am justified in my belief even though my conscience has been compelling me not to publicize my feelings.

First, last summer (spring's end) I tried to run for the position of secretary, McLaughlin College. When I was 'interviewed' by the entire McLaughlin Council I was laughed at, literally. The fact that I was not really given a fair shake and that the decision of the college (that was, not to elect me for the position) lacked any kind of impartiality, are representative of the kind of attitude (closed) the Student Council takes as a whole. When I questioned this decision, I was told that the position of secretary was usually given to a female candidate. Today the position is occupied by a female.

Next, I tried to run as a candidate for the position of General Councillor/CYSF Representative (McLaughlin) in October. Again I was met with some internal opposition. The fact that people were victimizing me (and my campaign) by putting up 'FUCK NORM' posters and slandering my name throughout the college meant that I really didn't have a fair chance in the election. In other words, emotional outburst rather than pure logic was employed to justify the smut campaign.

The fact that the election itself was a LAUGH, that such things as an all-candidates meeting, the location of where the election was to be held, and who was running for which position, was left virtually unpublicized.

Disorganization, mockery and plain stupidity, I feel, are words which accurately describe the college's apathetic attitude toward voting, electioneering and politics in general.

To sum up, I feel this entire issue is one which affects not only myself but my peers and the university's residential and commuting community. It is an issue which must not be left unchallenged or unopposed if we, as equals, are to think

and act as academically-minded individuals.

—Norman G. Kester

A real bargain

Editor:

The Council of York Student Federation demanded an immediate end to the (YUSA) strike and stated "students... should not be sacrificed in a labor dispute." (*Globe and Mail*, Oct. 13, 1984) There has to be a better way.

Collective bargaining, at York University, should not be a contest between union and administration, but often has been as evidenced by "victory celebrations" after successful settlements. We should be working together to make York the best university it can be. Working together was not effectively accomplished prior to the certification of labor unions at York. Unfortunately, York's bargaining process in the competitive, industrial-business world, a process which is inappropriate in a non-profit university where our products are educated students and research. There has to be a better way.

Collective bargaining at York has seen repeated threats of strikes and several strikes. I do not wish to discuss the complex issue of the right to strike, but I do want to discuss a matter over which we have control, does not violate Provincial statutes, and may lead toward better contract negotiations. Statements issued by unions and by the administration make it clear that each frequently has a different perception of common issues; e.g., available funds or the latest offers and concessions made at the bargaining table. Thus, I would make two suggestions.

1. York needs a negotiating ombudsman, paid jointly by the unions and the administration, who would have access to all York financial information and union-administration interactions. With an independent, unbiased ombudsman there should be no dispute about how much or how little money York has. (The money available to administer York University does not belong to the administration, but to the University. The admini-

stration has the responsibility of distributing the funds in the best interests of the University.) Monetary questions would revolve only around the allocation of funds. This ombudsman would not be a mediator, conciliator or arbitrator, but merely an independent, unbiased source of information, available to all unions and the administration.

2. A council representing all unions should be formed, which would meet with the administration to learn, in broad outlines, the administration's proposed financial allocations for the coming year. These meetings would be advisory, consultative interactions, based on the premise that York is not in the business of making a profit, but only of accomplishing two primary goals: teaching and research. All other activities are secondary and the allocation of our income must therefore optimize these two functions. The union views on these matters should help the administrators responsible for the distribution of funds, and the administration's proposals should foster a better understanding of what happens to the available money. There has to be a better way to disseminate information and a better way to understand the other party's point of view. With these two factors, when the administration and a union sit down to negotiate it should be easier to reach an agreement without threatening to strike.

What is wrong with the threat of a strike? There are at least two things wrong with it. (1) The uncertainty accompanying the threat is disruptive for students who become innocent pawns in the negotiating process. (2) The amount of time taken by faculty and staff discussing a possible impending strike is incredible. One needs only to walk around a department to see the amount of time spent discussing impending strikes, contracts and negotiations. The loss of time from teaching, research as well as the support thereof, costs much more than can be easily tallied on an accountant's ledger.

It is in all our best interests to distribute available funds to optimize the only two functions that York has, teaching and research. These functions cannot be

cont'd on page 11

excalibur

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Excalibur is published every Thursday during the academic session (September to April) by Excalibur Publications Inc., 111 Central Square, York University, 4700

Keele St., Downsview, Ontario, M3J 1P3. Contents copyright © 1984 Excalibur

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member of the Ontario Community Newspaper Association. ISSN 0823-1915

EDITORIAL: 667-3201

ADVERTISING: 667-3800 Winner of OCNA Award for General Excellence in Advertising 1984

TYPESETTING: 667-3201

For National Advertising, this paper is a member of The Campus Network.

310 Davenport Road, Toronto, Ontario M5R 3K2 (416) 925-6358

