

The plan, a remarkable piece of non-doctrinaire thinking by union members and employers alike, involved a 20-per-cent reduction in salaries paid for maintenance work by members of the Millwrights Maintenance Union. It was agreed, however, that the men do maintenance work on flex time, receiving a premium of 14-per-cent for weekend work when plants are shut down and repair work can proceed. They receive days off during the normal working week. The overtime rate for maintenance was also reduced from double time to time and a half.

Gene Davidson, business manager for the union, estimated that members would as a result of the new agreement pick up an additional 600 to 800 hours of work a year, which would mean at least \$3,000 dollars added income for each man. Before the agreement, non-union firms were getting much of the maintenance work because they offered lower prices. "We're happy with it," said Davidson. "The employers and the men are both in the same bag."

George Atkins, speaking for the Labour Relations Council, which negotiates for major construction firms in the province, commented that the agreement was "a good example of how a union and employers can co-operate for the best of both."

"The pay cut means the union firm now is competitive and can bid and recapture maintenance work it lost to the non-union companies. The non-union companies still will be paying lower wages, but we have cut the difference to where our member firms can bid against them."

Apart from increasing incomes and getting men off unemployment insurance for part of the year, the agreement has other benefits. Some of the older men and some with families would rather have less pay an hour and be able to stay home than go and work in the North. By creating new job opportunities in the South, it is even hoped that the agreement will provide year-round employment. ♦

Marshal McLuhan pronounces on the Ethereal Society

Society "has degenerated from a physical to an ethereal event," according to Marshall McLuhan, still pronouncing on the human race in general and communications in particular from his vantage at the University of Toronto.

Professor McLuhan, widely hailed as an expert on modern communications and Prophet of Pop Culture, holds forth

regularly before packed audiences at the teaching centre he founded in an old coach house attached to St. Michael's College, University of Toronto. It is called The Centre for Culture and Technology.

The coach house with its quaint, peaked roof and a tall tree growing by the front door is not a likely setting for anyone so intensely involved in today. Inside, the walls are covered with posters. Instead of a blackboard there is a psychedelic mural at the front of the room. A hand-lettered sign on one wall says: "The first thing is to gain perception, though it cost you all you have."

Though it is attached to the university, not all the classes at the Centre are restricted to students: every Monday, from 8 to 10 p.m., there is an open session. Anyone can attend, as long as there is room. If there are not enough chairs, people can sit on the floor and a lot of them do.

It was at one of these sessions that Professor McLuhan recently made his statement about the ethereal nature of society. "We're no longer substantial beings," he declared. "Your're on the air" means a considerable etherealization of your own being... a diminution. When they spread you that thin, there's not much of you."

There is a playfulness in McLuhan's attitude to his subject which sometimes leaves his audience in doubt as to how seriously such statements are intended. He does not rule out the view that much of his writing can be taken both literally and as a joke: he says he does not take it too seriously himself. But people listen avidly as the distinguished looking, grey suited figure puts forward these extraordinary ideas.

Perhaps more serious were his remarks about "the listener as liar." He said, "The lie, no matter how unbased, or baseless, or base has only to be stated to have its effect. All the later retractions and cover-ups and so on can never wipe out that effect. Truth, probably because it is good news, doesn't have the same effect as the lie, or bad news — and so the temptation to lie for the sake of effect is overwhelming.

"Most people when they're listening to anything, translate it into themselves, or into their own wishes and whims, and lie to themselves quite freely about what they hear. The ordinary listener is a liar. That is, he fakes everything he hears, translates it into his own wishes. The user is the content."

The audience at Professor McLuhan's lectures is encouraged to participate in "the total electric drama" — but in practice many come just to watch the professor. From time to time he emits the sparks that have made him famous — most often when he is on his favourite subject, the media and their effects.

Research at the Centre is meanwhile being carried out on something called a speech compressor which, it appears, permits English words to be heard at

several times the usual reading rate. But the overall emphasis of the Centre is on discovery rather than instructions. Says McLuhan, "Our object is simply to study situations developing around us by means of technology.

"We are currently engaged in doing an inventory of all the breakthroughs in all the arts and sciences since 1900. What is a breakthrough? It's very simple. Whatever upsets the appletart is a breakthrough. When you see the people scrambling around trying to pick up the apples, then you know you've made a breakthrough." ♦

Sixteen-year-old completes 32-mile swim

A sixteen year old girl sliced three hours off the previous record for the gruelling 32-mile swim across Lake Ontario this summer. Cindy Nicholas, a Scarborough girl who learnt to swim at the age of 2½ and had been training every day from the age of five "for something like this", dived off the cold, dark shore of Youngstown at 2.20 a.m. on August 16. At 5.48 p.m. she stepped on to the Toronto shore to a tumultuous welcome from a crowd that gathered as news of her feat began to spread.

A cheerful, chunky little blonde, she kept cracking jokes through the first 27 miles of her swim. After that she was fighting pain and weariness, weeping as her red, swollen arms pounded away at the water — but her pace never fell below 70 strokes a minute. That is how she broke the previous record, set by Brenda Fisher in 1956, which was 18 hours and 50 minutes. The last successful attempt on Lake Ontario was in 1957.

It's a lot tougher than the 21-mile swim across the English channel, which has now been done so often that relatively little notice is taken of it. By comparison, Cindy was greeted on her arrival at the Toronto shore by a wealth of promised gifts — including over \$3,000 in cash, a new 2-door Astre car, an Arab horse, a trip anywhere in the world and 50 gallons of ice cream. Her story also rated the main headline and most of the front page of the Toronto *Globe and Mail*, as compared with the tiny paragraph that sometimes creeps into the British press to honour the latest Channel swim.

It's worth considering, if you are a swimmer in search of a challenge. But it will take some swimmer to improve on Cindy's 15 hours and 18 minutes. ♦