

# CUPE strike vote December 4

by Jeff Round

Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) Local 1392, representing Dalhousie cleaning and maintenance staff, have called for a strike vote meeting to be held on December 4. Contract talks with the university administration were broken off last week after a conciliator was called in to mediate the two groups.

Al Cunningham, representative of Local 1392, would not say whether the possibility of a strike was intended to force the Council of Maritime Premiers to change its policy on funding of post-secondary education. "We're talking with the administration, not the government," Cunningham said. It's the management's business where they get the money - if they have to go to the government to get it, fine.

Louis Vagianos, Vice-President of University Services, told the *Gazette* he did not think the possibility of a strike would change the government's mind. "The government feels they have treated us fairly. I don't think they'll be swayed," he said.

Contract negotiations came to a standstill when the university refused to exceed a 5.5% pay increase offer on the union's contract. Cunningham said he is willing to accept the university's explanation that present budgetary restrictions prevent an increase over 5.5%, but that he will not accept the offer as it stands.

CUPE is asking for a 10% increase from last year, Cunningham said. "The university's offer doesn't even bring us back to where we were before the AIB rollbacks." Under Anti-Inflation Board rulings 180 maintenance workers were



Dal Photo / Morris

required to repay the administration a total \$52,000 over a period of 1½ years.

"We are mainly concerned with putting food on our table," Cunningham said. "People at the low end of the stick are really being hurt. Because of the rollbacks our people are being hit harder than anybody else on campus."

Vagianos agreed with Cunningham that CUPE workers were the worst hit, adding that, "as CUPE was in this situation from the first we would like to do something a little different for them." It was Vagianos's hope that the matter could be settled within Dalhousie's present budget rather than have the university face a deficit on next year's budget.

Vagianos said that he would not speculate whether further concessions to the workers would necessitate a tuition increase to cover the cost. Nor does he believe that a strike will force the university to close. "A strike by maintenance workers would cause considerable hardship for the university, particularly in terms of many of the things we take for granted," Vagianos said. But the management will do its best to keep the university open.

Vagianos maintained that the administration hadn't given up trying to find a way back to the bargaining table. "We have found Al Cunningham to be a fair negotiator and we want to reach a settlement." Cunningham said that he did not want to see the university close but he felt the administration "could not ask persons to subsidize operations at Dal when city workers are getting paid over \$5 an hour."

## Chronicle Herald fires ten staffers

by Sheena Masson

Ten members of the *Halifax Chronicle Herald* were unexpectedly fired last week. The move is interpreted by sources close to the paper as a management attempt to prevent the editorial staff from joining the International Typographic Union (ITU). Management claimed, however, that the six editors, three reporters and one sports writer were fired because of "financial restraints".

In a news release of just two weeks ago, the *Herald* announced that they were expanding their national bureau personnel in order to provide more extensive news coverage. According to the *Herald*, circulation of the paper has recently increased substantially. It was also learned that one of the fired reporters had recently been awarded a large salary increase and praised for her work. Those fired were among many in the newsroom who expressed a desire to join ITU. Most of the newsroom staff, according to some employees want a union to ensure greater job security. Higher wages is not an issue, as the newspaper's wages are among the highest in the country.

The firing of several senior staff-members this summer created a feeling of insecurity in the newsroom, sources indicated. Among those fired at that time was veteran reporter Don MacDonald, who refused to relocate in Alberta. Also fired were former managing editor, Jack Reagan, who has been replaced by Bill Smith, and veteran staff person Doc Savage.

On November 16, thirty-three members of the newsroom personnel went late at night to the sixth floor of the Citadel Inn and signed a

card expressing their willingness to join ITU. Last Tuesday, Nov. 22, ten of those staff members who supported unionization were summoned to the office of managing editor Bill Smith and told that they were being "laid off" because of budgetary cutbacks. According to one *Herald* employee, there were rumours that ten more staff people would be fired, "but in light of the recent publicity, it is doubtful that the management will carry out its Original intentions."



Dal Photo / Drysdale

Many have questioned the *Herald's* statement that they are facing financial problems of such magnitude that they are forced to lay-off ten experienced journalists. The *Herald* has an estimated net worth of about twenty million dollars, making it one of the richest papers in Canada. Furthermore, sources have suggested that most of those fired feel they were dismissed

solely because of union activities, which is a direct violation of the Nova Scotia Labour Relations Act. Both editor-in-chief Harold Shea and Bill Smith refused comment.

The ten employees have presented their case to the Labour Relations Board in the hope that they will be re-instated. A second hearing has also been requested to decide whether there is sufficient support for the formation of a legal union of writers at the *Herald*.

The result of these firings has left the newsroom of the *Herald* in a state of "paranoia", according to one employee, who requested that his name be withheld for fear of also being fired. Those who did talk with the *Gazette* did so from phone

booths or at home from fear of being overheard. One employee told the *Gazette* that the newswriters of the *Herald* are now being "supervised" by the assignment editors. When one of the fired employees entered the *Herald* news office last week she was followed by a security guard to ensure that she did not talk with any of the remaining staff.

The lawyers representing the ten journalists said that they are confident of winning both cases, which are to appear before the board sometime this week.

If a union is formed at the *Herald*, editors and reporters will be ensured of greater job security, more say in editorial control and the right to strike.

## Graduate students lend AFS \$1000

After considerable debate, the Dalhousie Association of Graduate Students (DAGS) Council voted Monday to loan the Atlantic Federation of Students (AFS) \$1000. The loan is payable December 5 if AFS passes a budget that does not include Dalhousie Student AFS fees. It is repayable only upon release of these fees by the Dalhousie Student Council. The amount of the loan is equivalent to the estimated number of graduate students who paid the \$1 AFS fee for 1977-78.

The DAGS vote is in opposition to the attitude of the Dalhousie Student Council who decided not to release AFS fees. Upon the advice of several past AFS participants

now members of DAGS, the grad students voted to support AFS in its pursuit of regional student representation and political action.

The referendum giving AFS checkoff at Dalhousie happened during the election of Sampson and Mancini to the Student Union executive. The vote by DAGS to pay their share of the funds to the AFS maintains their moral, constitutional and political position.

DAGS will be sending two delegates to the emergency plenary of AFS in Wolfville on December 3. If graduate students have directives or suggestions to send to AFS they are encouraged to leave them at the Grad House before Saturday.