

CUPE workers may strike

by Rick Plociennik and John McLeod

Recent negotiations between the Dalhousie administration and CUPE local 1392, the Union representing the University's maintenance crew have come to a sudden and surprising halt. All indications are that a strike is imminent in the very near future. The contentious issues involve sick leave and the 'no contracting-out' clause.

A shroud of secrecy has characterized the discussions, with both the administration and Union representatives hesitant to reveal the specifics behind the break-off in negotiations. These negotiations are over the unions September '76 contract, and have drawn on for six months now.

At present the University has a sick leave policy that covers all of its employees, including faculty, secretarial and technical staff along with the maintenance personnel. This policy allows for unlimited sick leave during the year, provided a doctor's certificate is presented, stating the reason for the absence.

As one Union worker described the policy; "It's fair and just for both the University and our Union members. It allows our members to feel secure about their jobs and positions when they run into a bad streak of luck with their health, and it gives the university leeway to deal with abusers of the policy."

The university now feels that the policy is too lax, although they told the CUPE negotiators that they have "the best record for sick leave on campus". The administration wants to firm up the policy to deal with all cases that they interpret to be abusing the policy.

One of the CUPE negotiators said that the University's proposal amounts to "not allowing us to be sick. What they are suggesting means that, say a person working here for fourteen years hits one bad spell, well, it could mean their dismissal-even if they produce a doctor's certificate."

Union President Bill Kelly feels

the same way: "We're very disappointed in the University taking the stand that they have. They're forcing us to take a strike vote. The stand they have taken on sick leave is a foolish one for the University to take. Right now the sick leave gives our people the right to be sick while still having their job security, and it just seems incredible to me that they would force a strike on a thing like this."

Kelly, along with the other members of the CUPE negotiating team felt optimistic after their 13-hour negotiating session on March 11th, and were certain that a new contract would be agreed upon at their next meeting. But at last Friday's meeting, the University negotiators changed their minds on the entire proposal already agreed upon. They also stated their intention to remain firm on changing the sick leave policy.

This drastic change by the University negotiators came after a discussion with their superiors: Vice-Presidents, Vagianos, MacNeill and MacKay. According to an informed source the intention of the administration is to impose the policy setting the example for other different bargaining units to follow.

As one maintenance worker put it, "the University is trying to deny us our rights and saying that we don't count, but this sick leave is something worthwhile to fight for and we intend to fight hard. We all do".

The University in anticipating a strike during the first week of April, has already started to prepare for it by calling the supervisors together to plan how they will attempt to run the campus during the strike.

It has also been learned that the supervisors have, in some instances, approached the cleaning staff and encouraged them to accept the University's latest offer.

Bill Kelly has told the *Gazette* that the Union will be reacting on this latest move by the University to intimidate Union members to accept the proposal.



Dal Photo/Langille

Dalhousie maintenance workers will decide Monday whether or not to go out on strike.

B.C. students protest, postpone fee hikes

BURNABY (CUP) -- Student protests against proposed tuition fee increases at Simon Fraser University were instrumental in the March 1 decision of the board of governors to postpone the fee decision until April, pending more input from the university community.

One hundred and fifty students marched into the board chambers just before the closed session on tuition fees was scheduled to begin. Thirty of those students went to SFU administration president Pauline Jewett's office and urged her to open the fee increase discussion to students. When Jewett implied that an open meeting could be arranged, the students went back to the board of governors for similar assurances. As a result, the evening session was opened to students, however, only student members of the board were allowed to speak.

Before the March 1 meeting student society vice-president Robert Lauer had written to Jewett asking that the tuition decision be deferred until April. In the letter he

said: "It is our understanding that a comprehensive budget has not yet been prepared, therefore there is no way of determining the areas in which cutbacks will be implemented."

"We therefore request that fee increases be deferred until a budget has been prepared and distributed to all interested members of the university community (students, faculty and staff) so that their ideas and suggestions can be considered by the Board of Governors at its April meeting."

Jewett announced that all members of the university community will be asked to contribute recommendations on budget cutbacks and fee increases.

The board of governors decided that the university budget will be available to all "constituent" groups — including students and faculty.

The board's decision marks the first time that students have had an opportunity to have input into the university budget at SFU.

Funding reduced

by Valerie Mansour

The Council of Maritime Premiers has rejected the proposed 11.5% increase for university funding made by the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Council (MPHEC). The governments have decided to grant an increase of only 7% for 1977-78.

The 7% increase is a global figure which means that the shortfall faced by each university will differ. The individual institutions will therefore decide individually the amount by which their tuition will increase.

The MPHEC also had recommended that tuition costs be frozen for three years, but if that did not happen, they requested that tuition at least not be increased any more than 4%.

At Monday's Dalhousie Senate Meeting, University President Henry Hicks was quoted as saying

that he thought a 4% (\$30) increase would be ridiculous and that even an increase of 75 to 100 dollars would not be sufficient.

The *Gazette* also spoke with Vice-President Andy MacKay who indicated that the main squeeze will be on salaries. Admitting that a \$100 tuition increase would not do very much, he still felt that it would be the outside limit.

Don Soucy, AFS secretary coordinator is very disgusted with the government's decision. He told the *Gazette* that "the quality of education will suffer and even drastically raised student fees won't make up the difference." "It is ironic that the government is ignoring a board that they themselves set up."

Representatives from Nova Scotia Universities are meeting in Truro on Saturday with a protest being tentatively planned for next week.

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