

Students take responsibility for education

Sherbrooke (MDQS CUP)

About 230 students in the department of social work at the University of Sherbrooke have set up a parallel department in defiance of faculty attempts to restrict student participation in course determination and grading.

The student initiatives have received widespread support in Sherbrooke and throughout Quebec. The Sherbrooke Central Council of the Confederation of National Trade Unions and the local Construction Workers' Union have declared their support for the students, as have the Parti Quebecois Association of Sherbrooke County and an unemployed people's group.

Education is no longer simply the responsibility of the professor, the students feel. The entire department must cooperate in deciding the goals of the teaching process.

"Our action sustains a vision of the student based on responsibility and personal development inside a collectivity. The student cannot lose three or four years in a cocoon of university courses, powerless in face of the social reality which surrounds him," the students' manifesto declares.

The students decided to create a parallel department rather than organize sit-ins or demonstrations because they feel this best expresses their capabilities and responsibility with regard to their future.

"The record confirms that

students are capable of assuming their responsibilities and not simply of saying so or of claiming them," a student bulletin reads.

Since the creation of the Department of Social Work in 1967, students and professors had been unofficially cooperating in planning the curriculum and in grading.

Following closed conferences last summer, however, the professors decided that they alone had the right to grade students.

The students held a general meeting on November 2, a few days after they learned of the secret faculty decision, and issued a statement claiming equal rights with the professors and declaring that any other situation was unacceptable.

At a closed meeting November 5, the professors rejected the student demand for participation in grading. Only one of the seventeen faculty members dissented from this decision.

The students held another general meeting on November 10. They decided to set up a parallel department and to open formal negotiations with faculty and administration. A five-person negotiating team and a twelve-member committee charged with running the parallel department were named by the students.

Immediate and overwhelming community support have helped to make the parallel department a success. Eighty-eight resource

persons from across Quebec consented to lecture free of charge, and 35 appeared during the month before Christmas.

But negotiations have made little progress. Department head Jules Perron attempted to divide the students by threatening to fail those who did not submit their term work when it fell due in early December, but only

thirty students broke ranks.

Failing grades were recorded for 72 other students, and the department's refusal to expunge these grades is one of the major remaining obstacles to a settlement.

A student assembly on January 12 decided to publicize the struggle across Quebec. Five hundred information packets

were prepared, but just as they were about to be mailed, a group of professors including Perron requested new meetings with the students.

Some progress has since been made toward a compromise on the issue of grading procedures, but the two parties are still some distance apart.

Ryerson CUPE will strike if necessary

Toronto(CUP)

Janitorial, maintenance, boiler room and motor pool staff at Ryerson Polytechnical Institute could legally go on strike by the end of January, said Jim Anderson, a representative for the Canadian Union of Public Employees. "If conciliation proceedings fail to bring about a satisfactory agreement. The union could set up picket lines at all the main entrances to the campus by the end of the month."

The contract with 112 workers of local 233 of CUPE expired Sept. 30, 1971.

"Members voted on Jan. 6 rejecting the latest offer of the administration by 80 per cent," added Anderson, and in addition, "authorized their bargaining committee to proceed with strike action if it became necessary." Officials of local 233 emphasized that "it is the negotiating teams desire to continue talks with the administration in the hope of avoiding a strike." Since the contract expired a total of ten meetings have taken place between union and management.

The basic rate of pay for janitorial and other staff was \$3.00 per hour. The union's negotiating team is now bargaining for a basic rate of \$3.65 per hour. In their vote last Thursday, the members rejected an offer of \$3.24 as proposed by the administration negotiating team.

In a recent labor dispute between the administration of Glendon College and a CUPE local, the union was supported by the students. When it was found the CUPE local at Glendon, an affiliate of York

University in Toronto, would go out on strike to strengthen their bargaining position, the students voted to honor the picket lines in the event of a strike by the local.

With the support of the student body at Glendon, the CUPE local was able to settle their dispute with the administration. "If Ryerson, staff did go out on strike at the end of the month, they will be able to draw upon a strike fund of DRLS two million," commented Anderson, which is the amount the national office of CUPE has on hand for the members who are on strike."

Cupe is the largest independent union in the country which has no formal ties or head offices at an international level. It is the second largest union in Canada slightly short of the International Steelworkers in total membership. In the Toronto area alone, CUPE has 40,000 members. A union member commented that, "in the event of a possible strike at Ryerson at the end of the month, The Administration Supervisory personnel would have a hell of a time keeping the place heated."

If the union management meeting scheduled from Friday does not reach a settlement, the union may legally strike on Monday. They intend to ask student faculty support in not crossing picket line. They are now asking for a one year contract instead of a two year contract in order to enable them to get an 8 per cent raise this year and an 6 per cent increase next year.

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