

STRIKING NEWS TODAY

March 17, 2006

#8

Show me the “good offer”!

While steadfastly avoiding any discussion of workload and its effect on quality education, management keeps publicly focusing on its salary offer, insisting that it is a “good offer,” that faculty should accept it and end the strike. If it really *was* a good offer, we would not have rejected it five months ago by 97%. We would not have voted 80.4% in favour of a strike.

Workload

They say their “good offer” does not increase workload. NOT TRUE. While total annual workload might not rise, weekly workload goes up by averaging. Averaging was thrown out of our contract in 1985 on arbitrator Michael Skolnik’s recommendation. Workload would increase with the current offer, and the colleges would avoid overtime payment for the extra work.

But what about today’s workload? No increase — if it were true — is not good enough. Rae told the province that. McGuinty agreed.

What about the growing number of students in each class who still need individual attention? What about the additional time it takes to consult with students? What about the additional hours we already spend doing online work? What about the unpaid time we already take as professionals to thoroughly evaluate student assignments and give constructive feedback? A good offer would recognize and include our actual workload in the workload formula. This offer is no good! It is no good at all.

The offered increase of one hour a week to assist students is linked with obligatory *fixed* office and/or on-line hours. Professors would

be chained to their desks in a restrictive fashion that does not respond to either our students’ varied schedules or the peaks and valleys typical of each student’s needs over the course of a semester. It is not a good offer!

Salary

Management keeps trumpeting its “good” salary offer, repeating the figure of \$94,277.00 over four years. NOT TRUE.

That figure includes the ‘recognition allowance’ — not a real step at all and not available to all faculty. The average faculty salary today is \$76,000.

You know the expression, “figures lie and liars can figure?” Management says you get 12.6% **over** the four years. NOT TRUE.

Because the salary is increased incrementally, the actual additional amount you would receive over those four years is only 7.16% more than if you got no raise all. That is also the actual cost to the college — not 12.6%, but 7.16% **over** four years. Only in the last five months of the total 48 months would your salary be 12.6% higher than it is today. This year, your increase would be 2.43% — 2% for the first seven months, and 3% for the last five months.

The raise offered doesn’t even match the Ontario cost of living increase for the past year (from January ’05 to January ’06) which was 3.0%, according to Bank of Canada figures.

On top of everything, the salary offer ignores completely our key comparator group, Ontario university faculty, who have averaged 3%

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Why are we not at the bargaining table?

After the first few days of a strike, picketers begin to wonder why the parties haven't started talking again. This apparently fallow period is natural and was a feature of both previous college faculty strikes. There are a number of reasons for this.

First, although the union team has been flexible and creative in trying to find compromise solutions, the colleges have not deviated from their attempt to gut the workload formula. When one side refuses to change its position, it is impossible to negotiate anything.

Second, a test of our resolve is an expected part of the strike process. To make management do what logic dictates they must do, we have to apply pressure. Keeping up strong picket lines is part of that pressure, for it indicates we will not back down.

During this period, the parties reassess their

position, and there is pressure on them from the public, the government, the students... At this time, the public response is very much in favour of our stand for quality education. Thus, while nothing appears to be happening, the system is in fact dynamic.

Things *are* happening, but not out in the open like a punch-and-jury show. To keep things moving our way, we have to maintain our presence on the picket lines. Strong lines are a visible manifestation of our resolve. Management notices, as do the government and the public. Walking the line is important, though its connection to successful bargaining is not always evident.

It would be nice if walking the line for a couple of days produced instant gratification, but it would be a surprise if it worked so quickly. So let us be patient and persevere. Good things come to those who can wait — and time is definitely on our side.

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annual increases.

Hiring

ACAATO, the advocacy association for the Ontario community colleges, reported that, in 2003-04, Ontario colleges served 53% *more* students than 15 years earlier — with 22% *fewer* full-time faculty, as well as decreases in all other staff areas. Sharing the resultant increased workload is a constantly increasing number of poorly paid partial-load faculty throughout the system. There is no plan to convert these contract jobs into full-time positions in current programs.

Management has clearly stated that any new hiring will go towards staffing new programs. Current hiring is not even keeping pace with the rate of retirement.

Management claims in its press releases, "our priority has to be the students... we are committed to their academic success." Yet it is impossible to prepare students effectively for the workplace when they do not get adequate time with their teachers, counsellors and librarians. It is impossible to retain students who cannot meet with faculty to help them overcome challenges that might otherwise lead them to quit school.

It's time for management to make an offer that reflects a genuine commitment to quality education for our students.



STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

When the traffic lights are green, the picketers crossing the road have the right of way. A car attempting to turn either left or right onto a Seneca roadway *must* wait for a clear break in the pedestrian traffic before venturing forth. Therefore, leaving gaps as you cross is dangerous.

By using the stop signs provided and forming a solid picket line, you protect yourselves and you fulfill the purpose of picketing by drawing public attention to your cause — quality education in the colleges!