

STRIKING NEWS TODAY

March 20, 2006

#9

The Rally for Quality Education

Ted Montgomery removed his coat and hat as he stepped up the microphone on a chilly March 16 morning. He was unassuming until he spoke. "This is the largest gathering of college faculty that's ever been held in Ontario" A huge roar from over 5,000 striking faculty filled the air.

With grace and dignity, he roused the cheering crowd with his fiery speech. Ted knows how to connect with us – all the professors, librarians, and counsellors who are fighting for better education.

"I cannot tell you how proud I am to be among you today," he went to say. "Though I'm deeply saddened that we've been driven to this action by a management group committed to a shallow, dangerous and self-serving agenda, I'm overwhelmingly heartened by your commitment to the cause of quality education in Ontario's colleges."

Throughout the 10-minute speech, he referred to us as a team fighting for a just cause. His inspirational words touched us deeply, especially as he recited, one by one, the names of the strike leaders from the 24 colleges. Ted thanked them for their hard work and dedication. He knows that without a solid team, we would have lost the fight months ago.

"Faculty at every one of the 24 colleges have proven their courage, their dedication and their devotion to the principle that a college education must be a thing of value."

Ted is a true team builder and leader. He leads by example. He's out on the picket lines, he works with the people in the local office, and he builds long lasting, meaningful relationships with his bargaining team.

At the same time, he remains focused on his ob-



OPSEU president Leah Casselman and faculty bargaining team chair Ted Montgomery at Thursday's rally

jective. "I call on the premier of this province and his government not to stand idly by while college presidents turn Ontario's colleges into diploma mills. Ontario, and Ontarians deserve better. They deserve real teachers teaching real courses."

The rally was a resounding success. In true Ted Montgomery style, he left us with words of encouragement.

"It's time for the government to act. Let's hope this ends soon. With your support and continued efforts, we are almost there. I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

(Continued on page 3 - the rally)

Negotiations update — everything depends on quality

Contract negotiation talks between striking faculty and the colleges were set to resume at 9:30 a.m. this morning under the usual media blackout.

"We hope to see a serious and reasonable offer from them as talks resume on Monday," said chief union negotiator Ted Montgomery in a statement on Friday. "Quality education remains a key issue, and they have to address that. We say there is a semester completion strategy: settle. And that's done by dealing with the quality issue."

Both teams met with the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, Chris Bentley, on Friday morning. Nothing concrete emerged from the union team's meeting, other than an encouragement from the minister to continue the bargaining process.

The union team is optimistic that management got a strong message from the over 5,000 faculty at our rally, from the students' rally at Queen's Park, and from their Friday morning meeting with the minister — a message that they must come to the table and negotiate seriously. For the moment, however, we have only the current offer — the one that provoked our strike.

With each passing day, the need for a viable semester completion strategy becomes more pressing. The most workable strategy — a timely contract settlement — is possible only if management puts an offer on the table that addresses quality.

The key for striking faculty is to maintain our pressure on management. It's our rally that pushed management back to the bargaining table. But if the colleges sense that our resolve is weakening, they won't bargain seriously. They'll stick with Rick Miner's strategy of 'buying time' — at the expense of our students.

To force management to negotiate seriously, we must keep a strong presence on our picket lines and continue to communicate our message of quality education to our students, the public and the media: getting a settlement depends on quality.

Benefits During Strike

During the strike, benefits coverage continues at no cost to you. **OPSEU** will cover all insured benefits you had prior to the strike, including basic life insurance, supplementary, dependent and employee-pay-all option life (if you had this coverage prior to the strike), accidental death and dismemberment, extended health care (including vision and hearing), dental, and long term disability.

OPSEU will also cover the insured benefits of partial-load faculty who had benefits coverage prior to the strike.

Other employer-provided benefits, such as maternity/paternity leave top-up, vacation, bereavement leave and short-term sick pay do not continue during the strike since the collective agreement no longer applies.



Pull up your socks, McGuinty!

Paddy Musson (pictured above), president of OPSEU Local 110 (Fanshawe College faculty) and co-coordinator of the union's provincial strike committee, called on strikers to stay the course.

"We must stay on the message that we have to give to all the politicians," she said. "In order to do our jobs, we need smaller classes, we need more time with our students, and we need more teachers to be able to deliver the quality that the students here, and the students across the province, deserve from us."

Musson scoffed at a management plan, announced this week, to guarantee that students would not lose their semester. Musson called it "play teaching."

"I think they did us a great favour," she said. "I think that coming out with such a clearly untenable plan, such a screwball plan, helped to get the Minister to call the parties together."

“Students crammed in class”

Seneca student's letter to the editor published in the Toronto Sun, Friday 17, 2006

I have two cents I'd like to give you about the current college teachers' strike and how it's affecting the students.

Everything I have read so far is asking the teachers why they are being so "selfish." I am a student at Seneca College in the court and tribunal agent program. I have 40 students in my class.

In the first year of school, we were broken into two "streams" because of the number of students.

After two semesters, we lost a fair number of students. That left us at about 55, who were put together in one class.

Now we are down to 40, crammed into classrooms that seat 30. We have had computer classes assigned to us that have only 32 terminals and not enough chairs.

At the King campus, there is a portable that seats about 30 to 35 students, and the police foundation students don't have enough room to open the Highway Traffic Act because they have to seat 45 students in it.

I think it's time the students looked at the quality of education they're getting and start realizing that the teachers are the only ones standing up for them. If it was only money they wanted, this would have been resolved the day before the strike.

Shanna Dullege



Hundreds of college students showed up to support faculty demands.

(Continued from page 1 - the rally)

Ted left the stage, and the Samba Squad, a Toronto-based Brazilian drumming ensemble, led the cheering crowd along Dundas and north up Bay to the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Ted stood in the middle of Dundas, meeting us and shaking as many hands as he could. He offered us words of encouragement and hope that we would soon be back at our jobs. Such dedication spurs us on to continue our struggle for better education.

For a transcript of the entire speech, go to: http://www.opseu.org/caat/caat_ac/





Jim Turk, executive director of CAUT (Canadian Association of University Teachers), delivered heartfelt support



Toronto's Samba Squad energized the 5,000 striking faculty gathered from all over Ontario at the rally.



*Jesse Greener, Canadian Federation of Students (Ontario)
"For every two per cent increase in the number of students at college, we see a one per cent decline in the number of faculty. That's a shame. That's not right."*



**Oh you can't scare me I'm sticking to the Union
I'm sticking to the Union, I'm sticking to the Union,
Oh you can't scare me I'm sticking to the Union,
I'm sticking to the union, till the day I die.**



To ensure you are paid for strike duty, always sign in with your officially designated picket captain !