



TO: CAAT Academic Local Presidents
FROM: The Faculty Negotiating Team
DATE: February 5, 2006
RE: Strikes and Strike Votes

Here are some facts you might want to share with your members in light of some of the most recent management communications.

The York University Strike

The York full-time faculty strike began on March 20, 1997. The end of term was April 4. There were 12 days of class remaining in the term when the strike began.

There is no university equivalent body for York or any Ontario university to the College Relations Commission which monitors the possible negative impact on students of a strike or lockout in the colleges.

Like the Education Relations Commission, which monitors elementary and secondary schools, the College Relations Commission has a duty to advise the government if the students' completion of courses of study is in jeopardy.

The Last Three Contracts

Strike support votes of 72% and 74.5% in two of the last three rounds of bargaining produced settlements without a strike.

In the third round, settlement was reached shortly before the scheduled strike vote was conducted.

College Faculty Strikes of 1984 and 1989

The 1984 strike lasted 19 calendar days and was ended by back-to-work legislation. The Instructional Assignment Review Committee was established to study workloads. The workload formula was agreed to following release of the Committee Report – "Survival or Excellence."

The 1989 strike lasted 28 calendar days and was ended when both parties, having been given notice that back-to-work legislation was to be introduced in the legislature the next day, agreed to arbitration instead. The arbitration established the Wages and Benefits Task Force. The arbitration denied management's demand to end the sick leave plan for existing employees, but amended some aspects of the plan for persons hired after April 1, 1991.

Role of the College Relations Commission

The College Relations Commission has a duty to advise the government if college students are in jeopardy of losing their year. The McGuinty Government has invested millions in the Bob Rae study of Ontario's post-secondary system and has pledged \$6.2 billion to colleges and universities in the next 5 years. For the McGuinty government to allow a faculty strike to continue beyond a point where students would be unable to complete their courses of study and lose the year, it would have to ignore the public advice of its supervisory and administrative body.

established in part to prevent that very occurrence. The faculty union prefers a negotiated settlement.

Settlement

The union prefers to settle an agreement without a strike. The current management offer is unacceptable. Management requested a bargaining meeting on January 24, 2006. Management made no changes to their offer at that meeting. The mediator advised that he would meet with the parties on February 15 and 16 after the strike vote.

The union will make every effort to encourage management to respond to the union's last offer of settlement and to find a settlement. Settlement is possible without a strike but that depends on management's willingness to address the issues in a fair and reasonable manner.

Strike votes have led to successful contract settlements many more times than they have led to strikes. And our two strikes in the 1980's led to important gains in workload, salary, and working conditions. Management may have determined that they will force a strike rather than make a fair settlement. Faculty cannot in good conscience abandon the principles enunciated in the Rae Report and by the McGuinty government for meaningful improvements to quality. Faculty cannot abandon the principles of our salary and benefits compensation in relation to the established comparator groups. Yet this is precisely what the current management negotiating committee is demanding.

The fact of the matter is that strike votes and even strikes are a legitimate part of the bargaining relationship. We do not want a strike. We want a fair contract.

As for the other false and misleading commentary circulated by the colleges to both faculty and students, we are not going to respond again. The union has addressed these issues already.

We will be commenting further on the matter of these communications themselves after the vote has been held.

In brief, we are greatly disappointed that management has wasted time, money, and effort on these attempts to create an atmosphere of distrust and animosity, rather than stick to the issues at hand. The reference to the York university strike is perhaps the most blatant example of distorting facts in a way that can only be understood as an effort to generate fear and uncertainty. It obviously has no bearing on our current negotiations. The issues are entirely different as are the circumstances. The reference to this one utterly unique strike which was quite at odds with every other education sector strike in Ontario, and to ignore all those strike votes that led directly to settlement reveals the writer's true intentions – to create fear, rather than add to debate or to present a viewpoint.

Ted Montgomery, for the bargaining team