news from cuasa

BARGAINING REPORT

President: Bob Rupert September 9, 1985

Your bargaining team will be going into conciliation on September 24 and 25. A pre-conciliation meeting with the employer's representatives has been scheduled for September 10. I will be attending this meeting.

While there are still many proposals on the bargaining table, we intend to concentrate on a few high priority matters through conciliator Murray Lapp. We believe substantial progress in these few areas would bring us close to a settlement.

The priority items in dispute are:

Salary Scale: We currently have an 8.7% proposal on the table. It is completely supported by research data. The employer's current offer is 2.6%.

Career Development Increase: Our proposal is to renew the current CDI arrangement which provides four fixed sums for members of the bargaining unit in four salary groups. The employer's proposal is to reduce the CDI payment by 50%.

Benefits: We want the employer to pay more than 50% of the OHIP premiums as it does for the other two major bargaining units on campus. Under the current contract, the employer reduces its contributions to OHIP as the cost of all benefit premiums rise. As a result, the employer's contribution to OHIP is now -9% (that is, employees pay 109% of the OHIP premiums). We want the cost sharing arrangements at the beginning of the contract to continue unchanged throughout the contract.

Affirmative Action: Fourteen weeks ago, we put a proposal on the table which would obligate the employer to engage in joint research on the current state of employment of women in our bargaining unit and into the availability of qualified women and the current and projected demand for their services. Based on this research, senior administrators would have to negotiate reasonable goals for the hiring of women. Although the employer found our proposals "interesting...thoughtful... an idea whose time has come...", they have not responded to us beyond that.

Mandatory Retirement: We say that mandatory retirement has been eliminated by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The management maintains forced retirement is still legal under the Charter. The employer has now reneged on an earlier commitment that no CUASA member reaching 65 should be forced to retire until the legal position becomes clear.

Sessionals: Our proposal is that sessional lecturers be hired primarily for special expertise or short-term need, and not to eliminate the need for full time, career faculty. While enrolment at Carleton has been rising, the "career" faculty establishment has not. There is no question that, at an average $3000 per year, it is cheaper to retain four sessionals to assume the teaching load of one career faculty member. But the increased administrative load this can cause for you, at the expense of your research role, and the devaluation of your service, poses long-term threats to you, to the university, and ultimately to the quality of education. Sessional lecturers, appropriately employed, provide a valuable service. Inappropriately employed, and exploited, they become a liability to the system--in effect, cheap labour. (Some teaching assistants at Carleton earn more for their services than sessional lecturers.) The exploitation of sessional lecturers prevents them from pursuing the development of their careers.

Career Development Increase: We propose that a bargaining unit member who is denied a Career Development Increase for failure to develop academically or professionally in one year but who subsequently regains the lost professional or academic ground, be restored to the full salary he or she would have earned. They would of course suffer the loss of salary in the substandard year. Currently, a lost CDI (and they are rare) becomes a permanent financial loss which, compounded over one's entire working lifetime can amount to many thousands of dollars of lost earnings. For example, persons denied CDI's at the beginning of their career but never subsequently denied will lose one year's salary during their lifetimes. Since pension income is proportional to lifetime earnings, the penalty continues after retirement.

Something's Wrong: Bargaining, to date, has been relatively unproductive. We have resolved some minor operational problems in the library and restored some lost professional stature to librarians. Beyond that, this round of negotiations has, so far, been a rather meaningless, frustrating and wasteful exercise.

We have tried to analyze the problem. One cause may be the existence of arbitration on money matters which was initially seen as a way of avoiding confrontation in this area.It may now lead the administration to be reluctant to bargain realistically about money. For political reasons, the university bargaining team may prefer that a "third party" impose a financial settlement rather than reach one in direct negotiations. The employer's team may, in fact be at the bargaining table without a genuine mandate to make decisions. If so, what is intended to be a problem-solving exercise may well have become the reverse. The long-term implications of such a breakdown could be serious. When we meet with the employer's representatives on September 10 we will raise this possibility with them.

Our willingness to arbitrate monetary differences(we still maintain the right to withdraw our services over non-monetary differences) has not served us particularly well at the bargaining table. We have lost a good deal of earning power and paid a price for our pacificism.

We will report to you again following our September 10 meeting.