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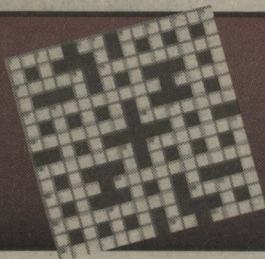
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UPEICADRE@GMAIL.COM



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Faculty Association Walks the Line

Stacey Murray
Reporter

Although negotiations between the administration and the Faculty Association continued into the evening, talks have ended and the Faculty Association began a strike 7:30 Tuesday morning. The labor disruption is the most recent course of action from the Faculty Association since they have been without contract since last July.

On March 14, a strike vote was taken and 84% voted in favor of strike action, with 280 out of the 370 members casting their vote.

While the Faculty Association has been in a legal position to strike as of March 15, they waited to set the date of March 21. Peters said one reason for this was to give as much chance to the administration to come to the table and recognize the support the faculty has shown to its union.

"One of the purposes for a strike vote is to get that leverage [of member support], and hope that just having the prospect of a strike is going to pressure the employer to come to the table."

The administration and Faculty Association met throughout last week, and have agreed on 7 of the 28 articles within the contract. Negotiations broke off late Monday night.

Of the articles remaining, salary, teaching workload, benefits, working conditions, and job security for sessional instructors are some outstanding issues. "There are still some significant things left on the table," Peters said last Friday.

The administration also withdrew an article concerning the code of conduct of faculty members. The article would have prevented faculty from speaking against issues that were supported by the University, even with sufficient grounds to do so. It was a major concern to the Faculty Association, and Peters is happy it's been removed. "The administration has removed that [article] from the table and that's not a concern for us anymore."

Peters spoke Friday about the

need for both sides to step up their game, and that he wasn't willing to move much with the Faculty Association's position. "It's a matter of a willingness [of the administration] to come across and bring what's necessary to get a good settlement."

While the Faculty Association has made it known they will be available to meet anytime in the coming days, Peters doesn't see the same attitude with the Administration. When it didn't appear as if the bargaining groups would meet on Friday, the Faculty Association set up a meeting to ensure they did.

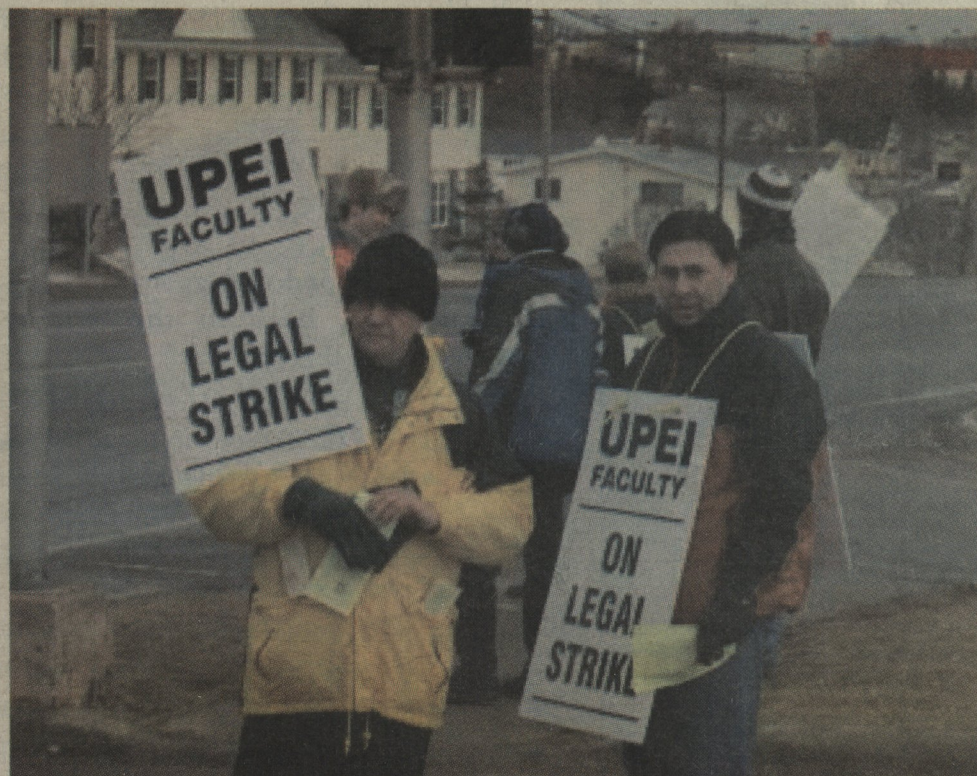
"If we hadn't taken that initiative, I don't believe we would've met at the table today."

The Administration, on the other hand, says they've been committed to meeting with the Faculty Association. "The UPEI negotiating team will continue to be available to meet anywhere, anytime with a Faculty Association team that has a mandate to negotiate," an update on the UPEI website announced Friday.

Over the weekend, the Faculty Association posted updates about negotiations, and noted that the administration had asked the faculty to submit student grades. In a letter to members, Peters wrote, "The intention here is clearly to use these grades as final grades in the event of a prolonged work stoppage."

"It is the position of the Faculty Association that Members are under no obligation to provide such course grades before the completion of the academic term, and should refuse to do so if asked. You may feel that providing your grades to the University or your services to the university during a strike is in the best interests of students, but prolonging the strike is not in the student's best interests. Everyone wants any work stoppage to be as short as possible."

The administration has yet to respond on their website about the



Faculty Association members walk the picket line early Tuesday morning.

Photo: Ray Keating

matter.

Anxiety across campus mounted during the past week, as a strike looked more and more likely. While all efforts are being made by both sides to avoid any long-term effects on students, neither side is sure what will happen at this point.

"I have no way of knowing how long the strike might be. If we end up on strike and it's short, like 3 to 5 days then that [catching-up] seems like something that is very manageable," Peters said.

"I don't see that at the end of the day that there's a real possibility of the semester being lost, but I can't give you those assurances because it's an unknown variable at this point in time," He added.

MacLauchlan also sees the importance of the issue, and the effects it may have. "The prospect of a strike by the UPEI Faculty Association is disconcerting. Everyone involved realizes the important student interests that are at stake in the event of a strike."

Both sides reminded students that no Canadian University has ever lost a semester due to a labor disruption.

During the strike, students will still have access to most parts of the university campus, but there will be no classes, unless told otherwise by professors. Students will be unable to contact professors as well, as the strike requires faculty to withdraw all services to students.

Faculty Association Members will be present at the two main entrances of the campus, forming an information picket, but they won't stop anyone from coming on campus. "As long as the people coming and going respect our right to be there, there shouldn't be any problem," Peters said, and added that he will be out on the picket line making his presence known.

"Our current situation will be resolved by negotiation, sooner or later. We all hope it will be sooner," MacLauchlan added in his newsletter last Friday.