

Bargaining battle

GTFs recruit before strike

By MIKE HOPKINS
Of the Emerald

GTF supporters are working to build a coalition of sympathetic blue collar workers, University employees, students and professors in case of a strike.

In counting their friends, GTF members expect at least nominal support from virtually all organized labor in the Eugene area.

That backing was promised in an Oct. 5 announcement, when the Lane County Labor Council's Executive Board quoted the executive secretary, Irv Fletcher, as saying "the full labor council would vote to grant strike sanction and seek support for the GTFs from other area labor groups and employee associations" if the GTF ratifies a strike.

A strike sanction constitutes organized labor's official recognition of a GTF walk-out and has the effect of urging the labor

working hours, she noted.

For classified personnel who don't want to "scab" — that is, do the work of strikers — Hollister suggest refusing to perform duties outside their job descriptions.

Members of Local 3209 American Federation of Teachers, made up of some 55 University faculty members, are circulating a petition supporting a GTF strike.

The petition, to be published in the Emerald if the GTF votes to strike, recommends that faculty refuse to perform GTF work or to help replace GTFs with other students or "community people." The petition also suggest faculty members oppose University pressure on GTFs to break the strike and not penalize students who support the walkout.

An accompanying letter signed by the executive committee of the faculty local asks the group's members to seek signa-

"We may define bargaining power as the ability to secure another's agreement on one's own terms. A union's bargaining power at any point of time is, for example, management's willingness to agree to the union's terms. Management's willingness in turn depends upon the cost of disagreeing with the union terms, relative to the cost of agreeing to them."

By labor economists Neil Chamberlain and James Kuhn.

council's 46 affiliated locals to honor picket lines.

Such action would not require locals to follow suit; the final decision whether to honor GTF picket lines technically belongs to individual union members. However, Fletcher says that "telling a union about honoring an authorized picket line is like Billy Graham telling his grandson not to swear."

Herb Herzberg, an official with the Building and Construction Trades Council in Lane County, which consists of 22 locals representing such skilled workers as electricians, plumbers and painters, says the trades council probably would follow the Lane Council in granting a strike sanction.

Herzberg, head of Local 85 of the Construction General Laborers in Eugene, confirmed that his local would respect GTF picket lines should the trades council sanction its strike, though he declined to speculate whether that council's other affiliated locals would do the same.

Hugh Perkins, executive secretary Local 57 of the Teamsters, already has promised his union's support, described by Fletcher as "very critical" to a GTF walkout.

The Oregon State Employees Association, which represents classified personnel at the University, has begun considering ways its members might aid the GTF. Oregon law prohibits public employees from refusing to cross any picket lines but those of their own local. Those who do could lose their jobs.

Anna Sue Hollister, director of OSEA District 12, which encompasses the University, reports that a University chapter of OSEA members approved a motion sent last week to the OSEA state board supporting the GTF's effort to gain a contract.

Legal ways public employees could assist striking GTFs, Hollister suggests, include contributing money to the GTF, making coffee and signs for picketers and walking picket lines themselves. Such actions by public employees are illegal during

tures from "colleagues and possible sympathizers" in other departments. "We have worded the text (of the petition) carefully so that it does not commit the signers to advocating an illegal act," the letter states.

The GTF itself also is planning the details of a number of strike-support activities, according to Jeff Edmundson, secretary of the union.

Among the most important of these, Edmundson says, is building membership. The union now has about 320 members, up from a peak of 290 last year; about 100 members have been lost through attrition over the summer, indicating approximately 140 persons have joined the GTF since spring term ended.

As more GTFs join the union, Edmundson maintains, the threat of a strike to the University increases, and therefore the GTF's bargaining power grows.

The union is arranging interest-free loans for striking GTFs who miss a paycheck. Edmundson said he presumes the loans will be made by a credit union and backed by the American Federation of Teachers. Union leaders are looking into a plan to allow strikers to purchase food on credit, Edmundson added.

Edmundson reports the GTF is working with Don Chalmers of the Office of Student Advocacy to clarify legal questions relating to a strike, including what strikers' rights are, whether the University can require striking GTFs to pay tuition and what University facilities strikers may use.

Fund-raising activities are also planned. A concert featuring the music group Mithrandir is tentatively scheduled for sometime in November, and bake sales and film festivals are in the works.

The union intends to ask students for some kind of boycott of classes, but whether this will mean all University classes or only those taught by GTFs hasn't been decided. Edmundson feels it "most sensible" to ask students not to cross picket lines.

"The less the University functions, the more pressure is on them to settle," he said.



Emerald graphic

Salaries remain major labor issue

Editor's note: these stories analyze graduate teaching fellows negotiations to date and how a union strike might affect the University.

By MIKE HOPKINS
Of the Emerald

A list of 60 disputed labor issues between the University and the Graduate Teaching Fellows Federation has shrunk to fewer than five during 16 months of negotiations.

The threat of strike now hangs over the campus essentially because one major item remains unresolved: salaries.

Fact finder Arthur Hedges agreed with the University's rationale on union rights, union use of facilities, work environment, child care, work-study students and health insurance but compromised conflicting proposals for appointments-reappointments and the strike clause.

However, the union's negotiating team regarded the report's recommendations for salaries, workload, discipline and discharge as significant victories.

The University's salary offer has remained largely unchanged over a year of bargaining, which conforms to University Pres. William Boyd's claim that funds to accommodate a bigger pay raise simply aren't available.

The proposal calls for a 4.25 percent raise paid retroactively from September 1977; a 4 percent hike retroactive to April 1978; and a 6 percent increase originally scheduled for Dec. 1, 1978.

After GTF members had rejected the

end-of-year contract offer June 6, the University altered its proposal slightly, offering the choice between a five percent raise for Sept. 15 and a six percent increase beginning Dec. 1.

Referring frequently to a strike threat in its public announcements, the union has challenged the University to improve its salary offer or face a possible GTF walkout. The University negotiating team responded at the first bargaining session after the fact finders report with a revised proposal, and suggested establishing a \$25,000 fund compiled from private sources to help GTFs offset the cost of health care.

The GTF called the offer "totally inadequate." While accepting the idea of the "extra-contractual" fund, union negotiators argued that \$25,000 would give each GTF in the bargaining unit only \$33 per year. When an ensuing negotiation meeting produced no change in the salaries impasse, the GTF's executive council decided to schedule a strike vote for Thursday.

Bill Ratteree, GTF vice president, says the union already has made "a half-dozen reductions" in its salary demands over the course of negotiations. Inflation, the union argues, has eroded GTF salaries so that a pay hike today of 75 percent still would leave GTFs with lower real wages than they received in 1969, when graduate teaching assistants last negotiated "fair" salary levels with the University.

For support, GTF leaders simply point

to the factfinder's report: "Actually," Hedges wrote, "the \$40 per month requested by the union for a health plan effective September 15, 1978, would cost the employer very little more than the 5 percent raise it offered. . . . I do not consider that the union's salary requests for the nine month school year are out of line and I shall recommend their adoption."

In rejecting "with profound regret" the fact finder's report, Boyd pointed out that the University too has lost ground to inflation as well as declining enrollment.

"When the 'very little more' is multiplied by the total number of graduate teaching fellows," his statement said, "the product is substantial. It would amount to approximately \$230,000 for the first year and \$90,000 for each year thereafter. There is no such money available in any reserve account of this University."

Nor is the future likely to improve the situation. Roy Liewallen, chancellor of the Oregon State System of Higher Education, recently noted that the ramifications of the so-called tax revolt most likely will worsen the financial outlook for Oregon universities.

Nevertheless, the University insists the net compensation it provides GTFs, with a few notable exceptions in which individuals are overworked, is "competitive" with other major private and state universities in the West.

Although money for greater GTF wage increases conceivably could be found somewhere in the University's multimillion-dollar budget, administrators

think such a decision would be unwise. As Dan Weill, geology professor and University negotiating team member, put it in an open report to Boyd, "The funds which would be required to accept the fact finder's recommendation are not available unless we divert them from areas of higher priority."

Union leaders adamant about higher wages are concerned with more than just money. Jerry Dodds, an Oregon Federation of Teachers official who assisted the GTF extensively during negotiations and fact-finding, charges that the University began contract talks last year with a specific funding level budgeted for GTF salaries in mind, gave this raise to GTFs not in the bargaining unit and demanded the GTF accept the same increase.

This tells GTFs, Dodds maintains, that they can obtain no higher wages with union representation than without.

"This is inherently destructive of the union operation," he says. "It endangers the union's security."

In addition to the salary question, the union and the University remain significantly divided on two other issues.

In testimony before the fact-finder on workload, the University proposed that a GTF with a .3 FTE (full-time equivalent) appointment be expected to work 12-14 hours per week, while the GTF argued for a simple 12-hour limit. In subsequent negotiations the University agreed to the 2-hour standard but now wants to compute

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Factions split on strike vote

By MARY FORAN
Of the Emerald

In the face of an impending GTF strike vote, GTFs, faculty and students are choosing sides and making plans to support their views.

The rapid increase in GTF membership shows that "now it's affecting all of us," says Cindy Corison, Speech GTF and union member.

"We're representing the entire population," says Corison. "How they vote will tell us how they feel." Corison says that most GTFs support the efforts of the union. "That's what neat to see," she adds. "I just hope it will continue."

Some GTFs, however, do not feel that the union represents them. "I respect the union's right to strike," says Luis Verano, a non-union GTF in the romance languages department, "but I also expect them to respect mine not to do so."

Verano says that he sees the GTF position as an award rather than a job. "By paying my tuition and giving me money to cover my living expenses, the University has enabled me to earn my Ph.D. In turn, I have taught for them, but the way I see it, this teaching is not a one-way deal since I have also benefited from the practice."

Verano says he is satisfied with his pay. "I feel that what the University pays me for teaching one class is sufficient to live as well as most students live, or better."

"There are no great luxuries in my life, but that's the way it is proverbially with students and I am after all a student too," he adds.

Verano says "neither side is being very open in this whole thing. The administration is probably hiding something but the union is also exaggerating the issue."

"Their notes, their cartoons, their words, everything they do tries to convince me that the administration is out to get me, but I don't really see the administration as some sort of natural enemy," says Verano.

The administration is caught in the educational financial squeeze, Verano says, which is why they may not be "totally honest." He adds that because of the general attitude of the voters, "it would seem that education's only immediate chance is to convince teachers to teach for less."

Verano says that the University has to find the minimum it can pay professors and still keep them.

"I guess that's what the union is saying," Verano says. "They want our minimums to be higher." "That's fine," he adds, "but I reserve the right to set my own minimum. I don't want them (the union) to set it for me."

Verano says that he will not teach the classes of striking GTFs, but will continue to teach his own, "not only because I don't feel anyone is exploiting me, but because I feel I have a commitment to my students, which goes beyond the fact that they pay my salary."

Verano says that especially in language classes, it takes at least three weeks to bring the class to an even level before they can start moving ahead as a unit. "Now that we are moving, I am not about to quit."

Margaret Simeral, an economics professor who teaches a class on labor economics, says that the idea of "merit" that's attached to the GTF position fosters "elitist individualism" and the idea that "it's a gift." "Some view the administration as a Santa Claus," Simeral adds that workers are better off if they have some say in their working conditions.

"In any job you have, it's only fair to

workers to know the criteria for evaluation," says Simeral adding that often faculty don't view themselves as workers and identify with the administration. "It's all ideology," she says.

"It comes from the overriding ideology of individualism that obscures the real relationships of conflict and the benefits of collective activity."

Simeral adds that there should be an equitable way to distribute what's available. Salaries shouldn't be looked at like gifts, Simeral says.

The major effect of a strike will be on the students, says Corison, depending on how long it lasts. "Time is a vital part of it," she adds.

"In the long run the disservice of a strike will be outweighed by the service we can give them," says Corison.

"GTFs do not want to strike, Corison adds. We're not strike happy, but we feel that striking is our only alternative to get a decent contract."

Corison says that considering all the classes taught by GTFs, they play an important role in the institution. "Without us they would be in a real bind."

Financial trouble affects how GTFs teach, Corison adds. "It's almost impossible to live on \$270 a month." Corison teaches six hours of classes and has office hours, grading and ten hours of her own classes besides. "That's a job," she says.

"If the students support our act—recognize our purpose and realize the importance of this—the strike should not last long," says Corison. "That is going to put pressure on the University to compromise," she says, adding that the fact finder's report was already a compromise.

Contingency plans have been made in some University departments in case the strike vote passes, though the GTF situation is different in each department.

"They were not made in anticipation of a strike," says Robert Berdahl, associate dean of arts and sciences. "We still don't expect a strike," he adds, saying that there was "no master plan" to cover GTF-taught classes in the event of a strike. "Obviously some classes would not be covered, but we'd try to do our best to make do," Berdahl says.

Berdahl says that departments were asked last summer what they would do in the event of a GTF strike, but most of the plans had to do with a GTF walk-out during registration.

"I'd be very surprised if most GTFs didn't strike," says Ben Johnson, Sociology Dept. Head whose GTFs are strongly unionized. Johnson says that sociology GTFs are mainly assistants to faculty. Plans will be made if the strike vote passes, says Johnson.

Robert Fagot, head of the psychology department, says that he spoke to GTFs, asking them to give the issue careful thought. He says he can't order faculty members to handle discussion sections and may have to cancel some.

Physics department head Bernd Crasemann says it would be impossible to keep introductory physics labs if GTFs struck. Faculty would have to put in longer hours and give fewer assignments, resulting in a "diluted instructional offering."

University Pres. William Boyd says that he's been assured that departments are prepared to use "adjunct personnel" in the event of a strike to cover class commitments. He says there are "plenty of qualified instructors" in the area who could fill in at lower wages than GTFs.

Collective bargaining history reviewed

1970 — The Graduate Student Employee Association negotiates a contract with the University stipulating wages, hours and a minimal grievance procedure. The GTF says the contract was not legally binding on either party.

December 1975 — A petition is circulated calling for an election to determine collective bargaining representation for GTFs. Within one month, more than 40 percent of the University's almost 900 GTFs sign (Oregon law requires 30 percent).

Mar. 2, 1976 — Employment Relations Board hearing considers arguments on GTFs right to collective bargaining. University opposes, saying GTFs are not employees but students.

Nov. 29, 1976 — ERB hearings examiner Rupert Park rules that an election should be held giving GTFs the option of voting for the GTF as collective bargaining agent or voting for no representation at all. University contests the ruling, saying that GTFs are students, not employees.

Feb. 4, 1977 — ERB rules in a 3-2 vote that GTFs have right to collective bargaining, excluding GTFs who receive grants or teach as a prerequisite for an advanced degree.

April 27-28, 1977 — Campus election certifies GTF as bargaining agent. Vote is 332 for GTF, 191 for no representation.

October 1977 — GTF and University begin collective bargaining.

March 29, 1978 — Accusing the University of stalling negotiations, the GTF declares impasse and requests mediation.

June 6, 1978 — GTF members vote 81-39 to reject University's last contract offer of the school year and send dispute to fact-finding.

Aug. 21-22, 1978 — Fact finder Arthur Hedges hears two days of testimony on eleven issues.

Sept. 12, 1978 — University and GTF receive fact finder's report.

Sept. 13, 1978 — GTF accepts report, challenging the University to do the same. University rejects the report the same day, citing a lack of funds to satisfy salary recommendation.

Sept. 28, 1978 — GTF members ratify bylaw amendment stipulating that at least a two-thirds vote of union's members is needed to approve a strike.

Oct. 3, 1978 — University increases salary offer, proposing a \$25,000 fund compiled from private sources to help GTFs pay for health care. GTF calls offer "totally inadequate."

Oct. 10, 1978 — GTF Executive Council calls a strike vote for Oct. 19.