

BARGAINING BULLETIN



On Wednesday, November 14th, the StFXAUT Executive filed for conciliation by application to the provincial Minister of Labour and Advanced Education. This was by no means a pro forma decision but came after two separate meetings of the Executive (November 6th and 13th) to specifically discuss the necessity and merits of this option. On the same day, the employer also filed for conciliation.

It is not necessary to be at impasse to ask for the presence of a provincially appointed Conciliator; in fact, it is a common part of the bargaining process. Our belief is that conciliation will help us make progress on some issues that have, so far, proven difficult.

Our members will by now be aware of the numerous proposals that have to date been refused by the employer, including professional development, all staff complement language, and small improvements to the long service supplement for part-time academic staff. Added to this list more recently is the rejection of minor tuition benefit enhancements, all the myriad improvements we seek to our group benefits, and the modest modernization of intellectual property. These lists are by no means exhaustive. Furthermore,

we have been the recipient of language pertaining to the Writing Centre that fails to adhere to the standards of equity, respect and fairness we are seeking. We are also being asked to subordinate key elements of our Academic Freedom to unknown "university policies" and "resource availability."

We were bemused to learn of the Administration's "frustration" with our lack of response to their financial counter-offer, as reported in this week's edition of *The Xaverian Weekly* and as included in their rationale for calling for conciliation. It is true, we have had their counter-offer to our salary scale proposals for one month, but we were in no position to formulate a reply in the absence of receiving their responses to a host of other items on the table. For example, the Group Benefits article that we tabled on August 17th was only returned to us last Friday—yes, that is almost three months later. Likewise, Tuition Benefits were tabled on August 13th and Intellectual Property was tabled on August 15th, and in each of these cases and more, we did not receive their "responses" (i.e. rejections) until last week. The obligation to provide substantive responses to tabled language has

regularly been theirs.

Our position at the table has been consistent—we are willing to negotiate on all items, including financials, but it is unreasonable of the Administration to expect a response to the counter-offer to our cost-of-living salary adjustment in isolation, without a full picture, and against the backdrop of routine denials of our interests. They have weakened any possible merits in their financial package by not demonstrating a greater commitment to the entire process of collective bargaining.

We have heard on repeated occasions that the Administration wished to simply retain the *Second Collective Agreement* intact without any significant changes. In contrast, we have heard from our members a clear message that numerous improvements are critically necessary. We will continue to advance the mandate given to us and present reasoned and reasonable proposals, and to represent the interests of all groups in our Bargaining Unit. We expect the Administration to give these proposals the same thoughtful consideration as we have given theirs, and to modify their current stance to one of compromise and respect. We are hopeful that a provincially appointed Conciliator can help in this regard.