RDTEU workers at MIT ratify three-year contract at meeting

By Roe Newman

After nearly eight months of negotiations, MIT's Research, Development, and Engineering Union ratified a three-year contract with MIT at a special union meeting on January 30. RDTEU president John Goddard called the new contract an advance for the union over earlier offers by the Institute, but still a step backwards from the previous two-year contract, which expired July 1, 1978.

Many union members at the meeting expressed dissatisfaction with the union Executive Board's failure to recommend either approval or rejection of the contract. After repeated requests by the members for an Executive Board recommendation, Goddard announced to the meeting that "This proposal is the not the type I'd recommended to the membership. The Executive Board does not recommend this proposal."

The primary differences between the new contract and the expired one are in the provisions for the accrual of sick and vacation leave during absence. Under the new pact, employees who are on leave because of extended illness or industrial accident will no longer accumulate additional sick leave while on leave. The main worker absentees because of extended illness will accumulate only 60 percent of standard vacation pay, and those absent due to accident will be allowed to accumulate vacation pay for at most one year.

The RDTEU's final offer for a three-year agreement, was the third offer to be considered by the RDTEU membership. Previous offers contained identical language concerning sick and vacation leave, and in addition, had restricted the number of participants in a grievance procedure who could receive pay while filing a grievance. Union members cited this as the primary reason for rejection of MIT's previous contract offer of November 6, which had also labeled the Institute's best and final offer.

Goddard, in addition to the meeting, expressed doubts about the union's ability to negotiate further on the sick and vacation leave provisions. "It's been a long, frustrating process, and they [management] won't move on these items," he remarked. Concerning the provisions themselves, Goddard commented, "This is a terrible move on their part. Here's MIT, right in front of the world... and they're penalizing people who through no fault of their own have to use a benefit."

—John Goddard, RDTEU president

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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