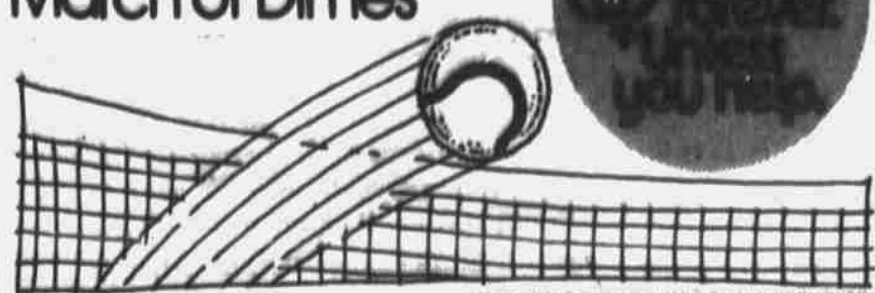


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Custodial employees allege department has unfairness

By Kevin Field

Some university custodial employees have charged that inequities and unfair practices exist within their department. They cited problems with preferential treatment, overtime pay policies and sick leave procedures.

"Some people seem to be able to get away with a lot of leniency, while others really get hit hard," said Myrna Gaskin, a department employee for nine years.

Dennis Sporvan, also a custodian, said that no one follows the department's established rules and procedures, and that management knows this. He added that management uses these rules to deal with "trouble makers."

However, John Dzerk, operational manager of the Physical Plant, said that he was not aware of the grievances.

"As far as I know, there aren't any grievances," he said. "I haven't been approached on any problems other than those of a personal nature."

About a year and a half ago, University Ombudsman Allan Dittmer suggested establishing an advisory board. The board was instituted and the hope of improving relations between the employees and the managers, Gaskin said.

Dzerk said the board recently disband-

ed because "it wasn't functioning properly."

A technicality involving the distribution of the minutes was given as the reason for disbanding the board, Sporvan said.

Gaskin said he believes the board was disbanded because they tried to file a grievance as a group.

Sporvan said the department refuses to discuss problems as a group, allowing discussion only on an individual basis.

Dittmer said he has dealt with the grievance problems over the past year and a half.

Major complaints concern employees coming late, leaving early or taking extra long breaks. Some employees have been reprimanded or even fired while others are allowed to continue these practices with no questions asked, Sporvan said.

Sporvan also mentioned problems with overtime pay practices.

Gaskin added that many of the problems result from little things that cannot be pinpointed. She listed work and supplies distribution as two examples.

"If a custodian comes with good intentions, sooner or later those intentions get washed down the drain," she said. "Promotion is non-existent in the department. You will live and die a custodian."

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