

TEACHERS DEFY WORK-TO-RULE

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Some York Region teachers plan to fight their union to reinstate extracurricular activities for students.

Despite the Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario's decision to continue with work-to-rule job action that discourages teachers from participating in extracurricular activities, many teachers continue to do so.

George Thomas, a Grade 3/4 teacher at Ashton Meadows Public School in Markham, coaches junior basketball, works with the school's environmental club and organizes the science fair.

WEIGH IN

► What do you think of some teachers' decision to stand up to their union? E-mail Jim Mason at jmason@yrmg.com

should be viewed in much the same light.

Mr. Thomas objects to union statements claiming teachers made the decision to withdraw voluntary activities, as he was never given the chance to have his say when the job action was implemented or when it was continued.

"Teachers are getting stomped on by the public, but not all of us agree with the actions taken and many of us carry on with activities," he said, pointing out most extracurriculars have resumed at his school, including sports, chess club, band, field trips, staff meetings and intramurals.

Staff and student morale have increased as a result, he said.

Not only does a lack of extracurriculars lessen the educational experience for stu-

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George Thomas
on the Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario's work-to-rule recommendation

dents, it also means no fundraising events are held for initiatives such as graduation, technology in the classroom and the arts.

Hopefully, his decision to speak out and resume volunteer activities will inspire more teachers to do the same, he said.

There is a feeling in the union vocal dissonance will be severely punished, he said.

"I have been warned by many to keep my mouth shut and go along with things."

Mr. Thomas isn't the first to speak out, as Richmond Hill teacher Susan Beattie has informed the union it can't tell her not to volunteer.

She will run her choir, plan field trips and attend meetings outside the instructional day if she chooses, she said.

Unless the union is participating in a legal strike, teachers have the ability to choose.

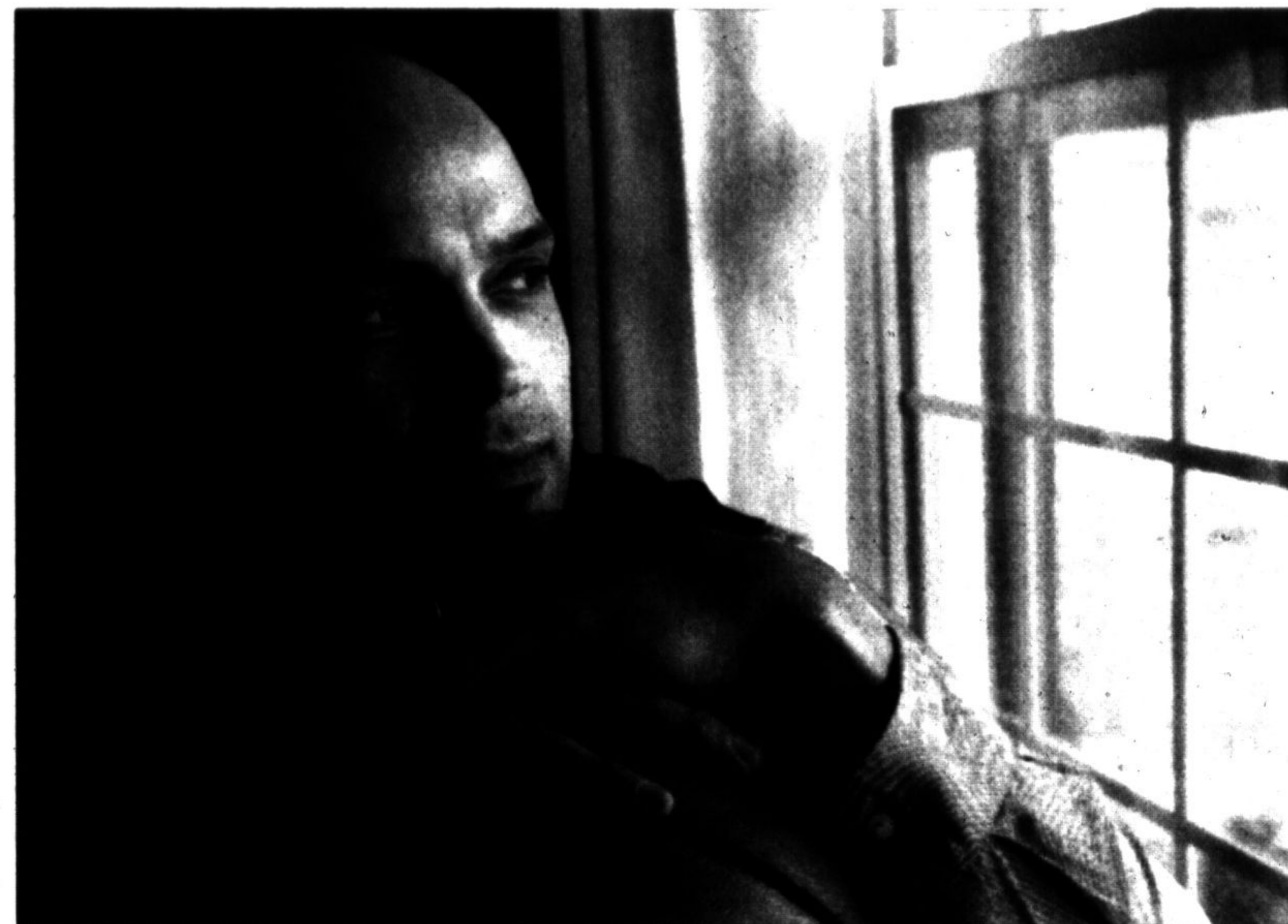
She, too, said her voice is not being heard before decisions are being made.

She served as a union steward for nearly five years before stepping down because she felt individuals who have opposing views from the union's are not welcome.

"The (ETFO) claims teachers want their voices heard but, sadly, the only voices that are welcomed in our organization are the ones that concur with the leadership," she said in an open letter to the union.

"I've had enough. You cannot compel me or any other member to withdraw from voluntary activities."

Requests for comments from ETFO president Sam Hammond and York Region ETFO president David Clegg were unanswered by press time.



STAFF PHOTO/STEVE SOMERVILLE

Teacher George Thomas runs basketball and other extracurricular activities at his school despite union directions to withdraw volunteer work.

7, Stouffville Sun-Tribune ■ www.yorkregion.com ■ Saturday, March 16, 2013

public information centre invitation



YRT/Viva invites you to attend a Public Information Centre (PIC). Come to the following PIC and offer your input into the 2014 YRT/Viva Annual Service Plan. Your feedback will help shape the future of public transit in The Regional Municipality of York.

Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville (lobby)

When: Tuesday, March 19 from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Where: 111 Sandiford Drive, Stouffville, ON L4A 0Z8

Please note: Sign language interpreter services will be available. The proposed YRT/Viva 2014 initiatives are available for public input at: yrt.ca/en/aboutus/serviceplanning.asp. Email your feedback to transitinfo@york.ca for consideration.

For complete details, visit yrt.ca or call 1-866-MOVE-YRT (668-3978).

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