

# Clarion

NEWSPAPER OF THE PROFESSIONAL STAFF CONGRESS / CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK



SEPTEMBER 2004



**POLITICS**  
**PSC clout grows in NYC, Albany**

Increased activism is paying off.

**PAGE 4**



**ON CHILDCARE, FAMILY LEAVE**

## PARENTS SPEAK OUT

When Prof. CarolAnn Daniel was expecting her second child, she didn't expect that the coming academic year would find her on Medicaid and qualifying for food stamps. But CUNY's failure to provide paid parental leave put her family in a finan-

cial hole. Faculty and staff with young children say CUNY needs to address their childcare needs, too. Campus childcare centers serve students, but not faculty or staff, and CUNY provides no financial help for the high cost of daycare. **PAGE 7**

### HEALTH & SAFETY

#### Union fights for info at CCNY

The Marshak science building at City College has problems – a lot of problems. PSC members who work there discuss how to best protect their health. **PAGE 6**

### THE UNION

#### A year in the life of the PSC

A look back at what the PSC has done in the last 12 months, from budget battles to a contract campaign to organizing drives to *Clarion*. **PAGE 10**

### CAMPUS ACCESS

#### Baruch arrest sparks change

A CUNY professor showed his CUNY ID card and walked into a CUNY building. Then he was arrested – and faculty, staff, & students demanded to know why. **PAGE 3**



### THE ELECTION

#### Why unions say no to Bush

From jobs to health care to equal rights, from education to war to Social Security, unions say Bush is a direct threat to their members' interests. **PAGE 12**



Just moved? Will you be out of town?

# Time to make sure you can vote

By EILEEN MORAN

All sides agree that this fall's election is unusually important, and deadlines for voter registration and absentee ballot requests are drawing near.

If you have recently moved or if you will be away from home on Election Day, you need to act now to make sure that you can vote. You can also help CUNY students register to vote, by distributing and collecting voter registration forms in your classes.

In New York State, the registration deadline is October 8 (this is a postmark deadline). The PSC is working with students and administration to facilitate voter registra-

tion on campuses for students – and for colleagues who may need to register or re-register. Call or e-mail Eileen Moran (718-631-3201; eyedon@earthlink.net) if you need forms or additional information. Many colleges will have a local campus contact.

The registration deadline in New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Florida is October 4, while the deadline in Connecticut is October 18.

## VOTING ABSENTEE

Some PSC members may be away from home on Election Day, on sabbatical or at an academic conference. Retirees may be out of town visiting friends and family. Check your calendar early and be sure to

request an absentee ballot if you will be away from your polling place on November 2.

If you will be out of the country, you should allow extra time to receive your ballot overseas and return it in a timely way. If you need to vote by mail, request an application for an absentee ballot now.

Absentee ballot procedures may vary by state, but most require that an application be filed several weeks before Election Day except in cases of sudden hospitalization. In most states, you must apply to your county-level board of elections.

In NYC the Board of Elections can be found at <http://vote.nyc.ny.us/>

index.jsp (go to “absentee voting” and download the application). In NYC your absentee application must be postmarked by Oct 26 – but this is cutting it very close. Your mailed ballot must be postmarked by Nov 1 for the General Election on November 2.

For elsewhere in New York State, you can find out how to contact your county board of elections at [www.elections.state.ny.us](http://www.elections.state.ny.us) or by calling 800-367-8683.

In New Jersey go to [www.njelections.org/absentee\\_doe.html](http://www.njelections.org/absentee_doe.html) for an application and information on where to send it, or call 877-NJVOTER.

For Connecticut, you can get absentee ballot forms and information

at [www.sots.state.ct.us](http://www.sots.state.ct.us). Note that the form must be returned to your county board, not the state; call 860-509-6100 for more information.

In Florida information on how to vote absentee can be obtained at <http://election.dos.state.fl.us/absenteevoting.shtml> or by calling 866-308-6739. Florida also permits early voting, weekdays at county offices, up to 15 days before Election Day.

In Pennsylvania, go to [www.dos.state.pa.us/voting](http://www.dos.state.pa.us/voting) and click on “County Information” on the left, or call 717-787-5280.

## Addendum

The PSC member shown on the cover of our Summer issue, at the May 24 contract rally, is Charles Thomas, associate professor at College of Staten Island. Prof. Thomas is former chair of the Performing and Creative Arts Department and former director of African American Studies at CSI.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR | WRITE TO: CLARION/PSC, 25 W. 43RD STREET, FIFTH FLOOR, NEW YORK, NY 10036. E-MAIL: PSC-EDITOR@ATT.NET. FAX: 212-302-7815.

# High stakes in this November's election

● As the presidential election approaches, the Bush administration's record should prompt voters to action.

Under Bush's “war on terrorism,” Halliburton and other no-bid contractors have reaped windfall profits from the Iraq war, prisoners in US custody have been abused in violation of international law, and US standing around the world has suffered. Chaos continues in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the death toll of civilians in the region fuels anti-US sentiment worldwide. Bush's foreign policy has clearly made us less safe, not more secure.

While misleading the country into a war to eradicate non-existent weapons of mass destruction, this administration pressed to undermine civil liberties at home. Bush policies have given the government excessive powers to invade our privacy, to detain citizens and non-citizens indefinitely without charge and without legal representation, and to suppress the public's right to know.

Working families have paid an especially heavy price for Bush's policies – in lives lost in war, record deficits, and loss of jobs, while the rich enjoy enormous tax breaks. Bush has left children behind by inadequately funding education, and he has championed the cause of religious fundamentalists who seek to undercut women's right to choice.

In November, voters should send a clear message: regime change begins at home.

José Luis Morín  
John Jay

## Our votes are for Bush

● Your article on the PSC Delegate Assembly's vote to endorse Kerry contains an error: George W. Bush favors the right to choose. He favors vouchers which give parents the right to choose schools. The relationship of church and state is not the issue; many independent schools are not church related. Even so, parents should have the right to choose schools even if church-related. The Clintons and the Gores placed their children in private schools, but they do not want those less wealthy to have that choice. Hardly ethical. Mr. Bush is pro-choice.

Perhaps you mean the right to choose abortion. Why not say it? Are you afraid to use “the A word”? We are not necessarily in favor of outlawing abortion, but we are not afraid to use the word. How can one answer the question, “Do you favor the right to choose?” Choose what? We hope you are not pro-choice on abortion and nothing else. We do not favor affirmative action except in rare cases.

Our votes are for Mr. Bush.

Joseph Vallone  
Queensborough  
& Mary Vallone

white supremacists to keep blacks out of law school may discourage people from taking the LSAT and applying to law school. Racism has three elements, all of them deadly: racism itself, the denial of racism, and the delusion of racism – imagining racism where it either has no meaning or does not exist.

People who throw around the term “white supremacist” often believe that traffic laws are enforced only against blacks, that the criminal justice system promotes crime to sustain itself, that the Army wants black soldiers to be killed so that they don't have to be paid benefits when they return home, and that standardized tests are intended to keep black people out of college.

But if you learn to read and write, you can get into law school somewhere. The University of Michigan recognizes that blacks do not do as well as whites and Asians on standardized tests and so gives blacks extra credit just for their race. Does this sound like a policy of white supremacists to you?

A nation of white supremacists would never have outlawed racism in the first place, but imagined racism is killing African Americans, blinding them to opportunity and robbing them of hope.

K.J. Walters  
Lehman College

● Clarion editor Peter Hogness responds:

*Crenshaw's presentation at the PSC's May forum on Brown v. Board of Education, which we excerpted in our last issue, was not about denying hope to anyone. Rather, it was about*

*developing a clear-eyed analysis of the situation that we face today.*

*The relationship between the LSAT and white supremacy is not a speculative one. One of the key lawsuits against affirmative action (Hopwood v. State of Texas) was based on a white applicant's complaint that she should have been admitted to law school in place of other applicants with lower LSAT scores. The lawsuit contended that there was a place in a law school class that the plaintiff deserved, and that her LSAT score was the proof that she deserved it. The Hopwood decision resulted in severe restrictions*

*on affirmative action programs.*

*But just as SAT scores do not correlate with grades during four years of college, LSAT scores have no clear connection to the ability to be an effective lawyer. LSAT scores do, however, correlate strongly with being white.*

*It is discriminatory to keep applicants of color out of law school with a test that does not effectively distinguish who will become a better lawyer. To rely so heavily on LSAT scores in law school admissions – or in court decisions like Hopwood – does not produce better lawyers, but it does help keep the legal profession lopsidedly white.*



On August 30, members of the PSC's Health and Safety Watchdogs joined the Sierra Club and NYCOSH in a vigil at the site of the World Trade Center. The vigil was held near Fiterman Hall, which held classrooms for BMCC until it was severely damaged in the September 11 attack. “Fiterman Hall stands as a blackened, broken building three years after the tragic attack,” said a leaflet that PSC activists distributed. Insurance companies claim that Fiterman can be repaired, but the PSC says that damage and contamination are too severe, and the building must be replaced. Above at right, BMCC Chapter Chair Jane Young speaks with a passerby.

## Write to Clarion

Letters should be no more than 150-200 words in length, and are subject to editing.

## No white supremacy in LSAT

● Kimberlé Crenshaw's article claiming that the LSAT is tool of



# Union vote ordered for Grad Center workers

By DAVE SANDERS

CUNY Research Foundation employees at the University's Graduate Center won a major legal victory in late June, when the National Labor Relations Board's regional director ordered an election on union representation. The workers have been organizing to join the PSC since May 2003.

"Things have been stalled here for some time, but we're finally moving forward," says Leah Obias, a publications associate at the Center for Philanthropy and Civil Society.

## UNION: VOTE NOW

But while the PSC has asked for the election to be held as soon as possible, RF management is trying to prevent these employees from being able to vote. The RF has filed an appeal with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) in Washington, DC, which referred the issue back to its regional office. At *Clarion* press time, a hearing on the appeal was expected soon.

## Research Foundation moves to block election

"The RF is basically hiring lawyers to thwart the democratic rights of its employees," said Rob Sauté, an RF employee and graduate student in sociology. He criticized the appeal as a stalling tactic designed to weaken union support.

"We need a union," Sauté told *Clarion*. "We need to act together so we have some bargaining power over our wages and working conditions." Sauté's feelings were echoed by graduate and non-graduate employees alike throughout the Grad Center. Many RF employees do essentially the same work as the PSC members with whom they work side-by-side.

"We don't get cost of living increases and that's a problem," says Hillary Webb, an RF employee at the Stanton/Heiskell Center for Public Policy in Telecommunications and Information Systems. "I just have to hope. Someone in a position

comparable to mine could get a raise, but I might not."

There are more than 200 RF employees at the Grad Center, about half of whom are CUNY graduate students. RF management's lawyers tried to argue that those who are students are not really workers, and therefore have no right to union representation – an argument that has been raised by university administrations to stop unionization of their graduate teaching assistants.

In the ruling, the NLRB regional director ruled that this argument was irrelevant. She noted that the RF does not grant degrees, and that CUNY and the RF insist that they are separate employers. "The graduate students in issue are not 'students' of the [Research Foundation]," she wrote. "Rather, they are graduate students of CUNY. The record indicates that the students and [the RF] stand in a conventional master-servant relation-

ship, in that the students perform services...in return for payment."

In addition, the ruling held that RF employees who happen to be grad students "are not performing work related to their graduate studies or doctoral thesis." In most cases, "their work is unrelated to their area of study," and any correlation is "purely fortuitous."

## NOT TEMPORARY

The decision also rejected management's argument that because RF positions are funded by grants, RF employees should be considered temporary and excluded from the bargaining unit. After noting that RF positions often involve "muddled titles and creative funding," the ruling concluded that "the record does not support that the unit work is casual, intermittent or sporadic."

In the wake of this decision, city and state labor leaders urged the RF to stop trying to block an election. In July Denis Hughes, president of the

New York State AFL-CIO, and Brian McLaughlin, president of the NYC Central Labor Council, voiced their support for the Grad Center workers' right to an election, and urged the RF to drop its appeal.

## NEW HEARING

RF management has so far declined to do so. In response to the RF's appeal against the order for a union election, the national NLRB asked its regional director to re-examine the issue.

On September 8, the director sent a list of further questions to both sides, and will hold a hearing soon at which they will respond. The recent national NLRB ruling on grad students at private colleges is sure to be discussed.

RF employees at the Grad Center told *Clarion* that they want an election, and they want it soon. "It seems the just and fair way to decide this issue is through an exercise in democracy," said Sauté. "The issue here is that we ought to have a right to have some voice in our workplace."

# Professor's arrest sparks Baruch policy change

By JULIA CLARKE and PETER HOGNESS

On June 22, Baruch College security arrested Prof. Bill Crain of CCNY for entering the campus without a prior appointment. The arrest sparked a storm of controversy that led Baruch College to retreat partially from its restrictive policies on campus access.

Crain's act of civil disobedience was sparked by an incident on May 24, after the PSC's mass contract rally outside Baruch. Two faculty members from Bronx Community College had tried to enter Baruch's main building, to speak with colleagues in the foreign language department and to go to the cafeteria, but were turned away. College policy limited building access to those with Baruch ID or "legitimate business" on campus – defined as having a prior appointment with Baruch faculty or staff, or attending a public event.

## SHOWED HIS I.D.

Crain went to Baruch on June 22 to challenge those restrictions. A professor of psychology who has been at CCNY for 34 years, Crain says he told security officers that he was a CUNY faculty member and showed them his City College ID card. When he was denied entry, Crain said, "I crawled under the turnstile."

## Went under turnstile

"I told security that this is supposed to be an open university," Crain told *Clarion*. "When they told me that I couldn't enter without clearance, I held out my hands and I told [them], 'Go ahead and arrest me, then.'"

## THROWN IN JAIL

Crain was charged with criminal trespass, disorderly conduct and resisting arrest. He was held in police custody for 14 hours, first at a local precinct and then in a holding pen at central booking to await his appearance before a judge. He was released after pleading guilty to disorderly conduct, and was sentenced to a one-year conditional discharge and a day of community service.

News of Crain's arrest and imprisonment sparked angry reactions from faculty. "What kind of threat did those responsible for his arrest really think that Bill posed? What kind of university do we work in where this kind of thing could happen?" asked Larry Hanley, also of CCNY, who is editor of the AAUP's *Academe*. Jamal Manassah, professor of electrical engineering at City College, said Baruch's policy was "foolish and repressive." Like

many, he insisted that all charges should be dropped.

"To get to the point where the University is arresting its own faculty members for trying to enter a University building is absurd," said PSC President Barbara Bowen. University Faculty Senate Chair Susan O'Malley called the arrest "appalling."

In a statement the next day, CUNY Chancellor Matthew Goldstein declined to discuss the arrest itself and said that security procedures would continue to be decided by authorities at each college. But the Chancellor noted that in his opinion, "faculty from any CUNY college should be permitted to enter all CUNY campuses by presenting a CUNY identification card."

The next day UFS Vice Chair Karen Kaplowitz discussed the issue with CUNY Senior Vice Chancellor Allan Dobrin and Special Counsel to the Chancellor Dave Fields, who told her that Baruch had changed its policy and would now allow access to all CUNY faculty with valid CUNY ID. "The re-examination of our policy was instigated by the Chancellor's statement," Baruch College spokesperson Vince Passaro later

## Baruch's doors now open to all CUNY faculty – but not to all staff or students



Baruch security puts the cuffs on Professor Bill Crain of City College.

explained. "We tried to find a balance between our security needs and the needs of CUNY faculty."

The liberalized access policy is limited to faculty and does not include CUNY staff or students. Passaro told *Clarion* that new policy language, distributed internally, refers to faculty alone, as did the Chancellor's statement. "Clearly there is a tradition of academic free exchange that made him comment on the issue of faculty," Passaro said.

## STAFF STILL EXCLUDED

"Baruch still has an exclusionary policy, and it treats the professional staff like second-class citizens," said Iris DeLutro, PSC vice president for cross-campus units. "Does anyone really think that we present a higher risk to Baruch's security? There is no legitimate reason to exclude members of CUNY's professional staff or CUNY students from entering the college if they have the proper credentials."

Agnes Abraham, chair of the Uni-

versity Student Senate, told *Clarion* that CUNY students with valid ID must have access to all CUNY campuses. She urged students who encounter problems to contact her at AgnesAbraham111@yahoo.com.

Ali Zaidi, one of the two BCC faculty who had been turned away on May 24, said that Baruch's change was a testimony to Crain's determination, but said it did not go far enough. Students and staff must be included, he said, as well as firmer guarantees. "We don't really have any rights until we get them in the union contract," Zaidi said.

The PSC's contract demand #26 states, "The University shall recognize the right of all members of the bargaining unit to have access to all CUNY college campuses." PSC President Bowen said the union would continue to press for this in the current contract talks.

"It's clear that this needs to be in the contract and not left up to the individual colleges," Bowen said. "Openness should be part of the fabric of a university."



# New activism produces growing political influence for PSC

By PETER HOGNESS

"Remember, we're all public employees," says Bob Wurman, a member of the PSC Legislation Committee. "Politics is what pays your salary. So there's no such thing as being 'too political.' Money comes into CUNY from City, State, and federal governments, and they all have an impact on our jobs."

The last few years have seen a dramatic growth in the PSC's political influence, and Wurman, a long-time committee member, has watched it happen. "We're much more organized than we were before," he says, "and when we go up to Albany we're much better prepared. The people up there know us and they know our issues."

"I was speaking to a new aide to a State legislator," says PSC Secretary Cecelia McCall, "and I asked her, 'Do you know who the PSC is?' She said, 'Of course! We get material from your union almost every day - how could I not know the PSC?'" McCall, who has led the union's legislative work, said this shows that grassroots action is effective: "The letters, the postcards, the faxes from our ACT NOW Web page - that's what makes the difference."

While the union does not win every battle, there are clear signs of its growing clout:

- The City Council has consistently rejected proposed mayoral cuts to CUNY's budget. The Council has gone on to add significant new funding for City University, even in tight budget years, for a 26% increase in City support since Fiscal Year 2001.

- In Albany this year, the Legislature adopted a budget with an 11% increase in CUNY's State support. While the governor vetoed several items and the final result is not yet known, even Pataki's own budget proposal included some increases. "We felt we turned a corner this year with the State Legislature," said McCall. "They are listening to our demands."

- When CUNY management asked Albany to change the tenure clock, without consulting with the union, it could not find a legislative sponsor for this unilateral move. Ron Canestrari, chair of the Assembly's Higher Education Committee, said, "What I've told CUNY is that if the PSC has objections or concerns...CUNY administration must sit down with the PSC and iron these differences out."

- After 80th Street announced higher tuition for undocumented immigrant students in November

## Member action gets results



PSC Secretary Cecelia McCall, speaking at the union's CUNY week awards ceremony, an annual event since 2001, as City Council members listen.

2001, the PSC worked with a coalition of community groups to win passage of a new State law that allows all NYC high school graduates to pay the in-state rate.

- Coalition work also pushed for a law that allows CUNY students to count college study towards workfare requirements. The City Council passed it over a mayoral veto, and the issue is now being fought out in court.

One of the sources of this political strength is the quality of the union's lobbying work. "We usually have very good literature," says Wurman. "I remember when we went up to Albany with our first 'budget book,' with the pie chart and so on, a number of [legislators] asked if they could keep it! Usually if you try to give them stuff, it's tossed aside with everything else."

"The comment I get from legislators and their aides is that they are always happy to talk to members of the PSC, because the literature we give out is very coherent and we know the facts," said Arthurine DeSola, a Higher Education Officer at QCC. "They say that with us, they can have a deeper conversation."

The union has sought to work closely with its state affiliate, New York State United Teachers. "NYSUT is now more active for CUNY and for higher education than they have ever been before," said McCall. "We really work in coalition with NYSUT, United University Professions at SUNY, the upstate commu-

nity colleges and CUNY administration." The PSC also works jointly with other CUNY campus unions, and is active in the statewide Coalition of Unions in Public Education.

### URBAN COLLEGES

The Legislation Committee has been active on federal legislation as well, working with the American Federation of Teachers to help shape legislation to renew the Higher Education Act. The AFT has adopted a PSC proposal to seek specific funding for urban colleges with high numbers of immigrant students, which would have a positive effect on CUNY.

Electoral work is another reason that the PSC is more politically visible than ever before. "The union has developed the capacity to target each district so we can make a dif-



Vera Weekes of Medgar Evers, co-coordinator of the PSC Legislation Committee & Councilman Robert Jackson

ference in these races," said PSC First Vice President Steve London, associate professor of political science at Brooklyn College.

A case in point is this month's primary victory for first-term State Senator Kevin Parker, who won renomination by 300 votes. "We have 200 members in that district," said McCall, "and our members worked phone banks to call every one of them." A strong supporter of the PSC, Parker has worked as an adjunct at CUNY and is a doctoral student in political science at the Graduate Center.

The PSC has developed a strong relationship with members of the City Council, particularly its Higher Education Committee. With term limits resulting in many more contested races and new faces, the union has used its endorsement interviews to educate candidates about CUNY issues.

"Now, when you go into these folks' offices, you're not starting from scratch," said Eileen Moran, Legislation Committee co-chair. "They *certainly* know our agenda and what is important to us, and most have been supportive."

Our challenge, said Moran, is to expand the horizon of what's considered politically possible. "There are still so many people in politics who assume that public funding is never going to change dramatically - and obviously, a dramatic change is exactly what CUNY needs," she continued.

### BROADER CHANGE

"If there's ever going to be real progress in terms of social spending, it's not going to happen just for higher ed," she observed. "It's going to be part of a much larger political change." That means a commitment to broader goals is really a practical necessity. "Unions have to think much longer term," she said, "even when they're considering the very material interests of their members."

Moran stressed that the Legislation Committee's work has depended on support from the union's membership at large. "No matter how energetic the committee is, it's only because people on the campuses have done their bit that we have come this far," she said. "Legislators do recognize whether they get 10 faxes or 50 - it makes a difference."

Certainly the union has seen defeats as well as victories, said London. "We couldn't stop last year's tuition increase, but we did work closely with Council Higher Education Committee Chair Charles Barron to put \$4.5 million of new money into a 'safety net' financial aid program based on need, to limit the tuition hike's impact on community college

students," he told *Clarion*. The still-unresolved State budget is another example of the need to further strengthen the union's work, Steve London said, and he urged members to get involved in political action.

"We've made a major effort to increase the political power of CUNY faculty and staff," said London. "Now that's bearing fruit, and we're building a power base to strengthen CUNY and the interests of our members."

## CUNY IN BRIEF

### CUNY's homeless students

As an adjunct at Kingsborough Community College, Eleanor Bader has seen what student homelessness looks like. "Every CUNY campus has students that are homeless, and in most cases they fade into the woodwork unless a teacher notices," Bader said. Though homeless student numbers are growing, CUNY, like most universities, does not have a system in place to help.

In the July issue of *The Progressive* magazine, Bader writes that students in the most expensive states like New York are "scrambling" to cover rising living and tuition costs, and some end up with no place to live. Susan O'Malley, chair of CUNY's University Faculty Senate, told Bader, "Attention today is not on serving the poor."

### Black enrollment down

Total black undergraduate enrollment at CUNY's senior colleges fell from 33,233 in Fall 2000 to 32,949 in Fall 2003, even as total registrations climbed from 104,874 to 112,505. But the proportion of incoming black freshmen at senior colleges stayed level, suggesting a problem with retention in later years.

Bill Crain of the PSC Open Access Committee said he was "troubled" by the decline, and said that CUNY should be more forthcoming with the data needed to understand such trends. "We seem to be constantly asking and waiting for" information on racial and ethnic trends, Crain said.

A report in the *New York Sun* noted that while black senior college enrollment at CUNY was going down, graduation rates for black high school students in NYC were headed in the opposite direction, rising from 44.4% in 2000 to 47.4% in 2003.



# Pataki vetoes gains for CUNY

By ESTHER KAPLAN

Last February, with State revenues on the rebound from the prolonged recession, PSC President Barbara Bowen testified at a budget hearing in Albany. "This year presents New York with a chance to build a City University of which we can all be proud," Bowen said. "For the first time in many years, that possibility is within our reach, institutionally and fiscally. I'm asking you to make it happen."

By summertime, it seemed the State Legislature had begun to listen. It approved a joint budget agreement on August 12 that increased aid for CUNY by 11.1% over last year, a significant boost in State support. The Legislature hiked spending for CUNY well beyond the levels in Governor Pataki's proposed budget, including money for new full-time faculty at senior colleges and an increase in base aid to community colleges.

The capital budget, too, included significant gains for CUNY, such as a new \$1.27 billion Five-Year Capital Investment Plan for senior colleges,

## PSC vows fight to override

to support facilities preservation, information system upgrades, upgraded science facilities and more. The Legislature also restored the Tuition Assistance Program, rejecting Pataki's proposal to withhold one-third of each grant until after graduation.

### RIGHT DIRECTION

After cuts to CUNY's State aid of some 40% over the past 14 years – including a particularly large reduction that accompanied last year's tuition increase – it appeared that State legislators had finally decided to staunch the bleeding. "Reversing the cuts in State aid that we experienced last year was a real victory for CUNY," said PSC First Vice-President Steve London, "and also a clear victory for the PSC and our state affiliate, NYSUT."

But Governor Pataki had 10 days to use his veto power – and veto he did, slashing a total of \$1.8 billion from nearly 200 State programs. Pataki used his line-item veto to cut

10 programs relevant to CUNY, including: \$5.5 million from community colleges; \$795,000 from senior colleges; an additional \$1 million earmarked for new senior college faculty hires; \$1.28 million from the SEEK Program, which offers financial support for low-income and underprepared students; and hundreds of thousands more from other student opportunity programs. "If these vetoes stand," says London, "Pataki will turn what was a good budget into one that barely lets us keep our head above water."

As far as the capital budget, London says, "It was a complete wipe-out." The governor eliminated \$1.6 billion in new borrowing over the next several years, which would halt many construction projects needed to protect health and safety.

"The budget sent to me simply spends too much and reforms too little," Pataki said, whose own proposed budget relied on cuts to meet

a significant, if shrinking, deficit. "Even with these vetoes, we will still face tremendous fiscal challenges in the days ahead." Senate Majority Leader Joe Bruno said he strongly disagreed with the governor's assessment of revenues, and called the Senate/Assembly budget "vital and responsible."

### The State Legislature boosted CUNY aid by 11%.

In addition to the vetoes, there is also a serious threat from Pataki's Division of the Budget (DoB) to impose a cap on how much of the budget CUNY is allowed to spend. The DoB has the authority to impose such caps if it contends that revenues and spending are not in balance; while it has done so before, this year the amount of money at stake could be much greater.

### CAP WOULD HURT

While no cap was yet in place as *Clarion* went to press, there were reports that it could put as much as \$22 million off-limits. This would leave CUNY without enough money to cover mandatory cost increases.

"What this means is that money that was approved for new faculty lines can't be spent if there's a cap," London explained. "Heating, pension costs and so on must be paid first – so this could have major consequences."

Bruno has not indicated whether he will support an override, and he does not plan to call the Senate back into session until after the November election. On September 20, the Democrat-led Assembly failed to pass an override by one vote, after Pataki applied heavy pressure that induced three Democrats to not appear. Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver vowed to try again and said he would succeed; the legislators have until the end of December to do so.

PSC Legislative Coordinator Cecilia McCall is pulling together a coalition of labor unions and educational institutions to make sure CUNY gets the funding it needs. "There will need to be a lot of pressure for an override," she said. "The fact that Pataki's putting so much pressure on these people is a sign that it will be a tough fight."

# NLRB rules against grad student unions

By DAVE SANDERS

In a 3-2 decision along party lines, the Republican-dominated National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) ruled last July that graduate students at private universities do not have the right to form unions. The Board's findings in a case at Brown University reverse a unanimous landmark ruling in 2000, in which the NLRB had recognized graduate students' right to organize at NYU.

"When I read the Board's [new] ruling I was stunned by the absence of any real arguments or evidence that justified their decision," said Cory Robin, an assistant professor of political science at Brooklyn College. "If an undergrad had written it, I would have flunked him."

### OUT OF TOUCH

The Board held that graduate students are receiving training, not performing work for a wage. Graduate students "have primarily an educational, not economic, relationship with their university," the majority asserted. But the two dissenting Board members called this view "woefully out of touch with contemporary academic reality," in which the role of graduate students has dramatically changed.

In recent years universities have cut costs by shifting responsibilities

## Decision affects private schools only

on to contingent workers, including graduate teaching and research assistants. "The tenured professor is a dying breed," said Michael Palm, unit chair of the Graduate Student Organizing Committee (GSOC) at NYU. "By relying on part-time labor, universities don't have to retain teachers and they save money on wages and benefits."

### Republicans side with management in case at Brown U.

"In previous generations, graduate students' teaching could maybe have been said to resemble something more like an apprenticeship," explained David Kazanjian, associate professor of English at Queens College and the Graduate Center. "But now they just throw grad students into a room – you teach the classes all on your own, do all the preparation and all of the grading. Often the class has nothing to do with your dissertation. So to say, 'What we're doing is labor and we need a union,' has made a very deep sense to a lot of people."

The new NLRB ruling does not apply to CUNY graduate students under the PSC contract, because the Board does not have jurisdiction over public institutions such as CUNY. But the explosion of graduate student organizing in recent years, at both private and public in-



Members of GET-UP, an AFT grad students' local at UPenn, on the march.

stitutions, has certainly affected the PSC. Robin and Kazanjian are among the many newer CUNY faculty members who were already experienced academic unionists when they joined the PSC. Both of them have been on strike – Robin at Yale and Kazanjian at Berkeley – and both are veteran organizers.

### BUSH APPOINTEES

In overturning graduate students' right to organize, President Bush's three Republican appointees prevailed by a one-vote margin. It was a marked change from just four years ago, when the bipartisan Labor Board unanimously declared that

graduate students are employees as well as students. "Bush has appointed ideologues, very conservative and hostile to labor," said Palm.

Similar petitions from management at Columbia, UPenn and elsewhere are still pending before the Board.

The NLRB's reversal will make it more difficult for graduate students at private universities to organize, but they show no signs of giving up the fight. "We intend to continue our struggle for a voice in our working conditions," said UPenn grad student Lauren Nata, "to gain recognition for our union and bargain a fair contract."

At NYU, where graduate students won a landmark contract providing raises of nearly 40% as well as health benefits, students are gearing up for an ambitious Fall organizing drive and preparing to bargain a new contract. The current agreement expires on August 31, 2005.

### "FAIR CONTRACT"

NYU management said it was "gratified" by the new NLRB decision. "We believe the NLRB decided wrongly in 2000," spokesman John Beckman noted. But he also called the current agreement between NYU and GSOC "a fair contract" that had been "bargained in good faith," and declined to comment on NYU's position on future negotiations.

Although NYU grad students must now organize without the protection of federal labor law, Palm is undeterred. "It wasn't the NLRB decision giving grad students organizing rights that convinced NYU to come to the table in 2000," he said. "They recognized our unit when they were faced with a strike authorization vote."

The NLRB's two dissenting members warned of "the prospect of continued labor unrest on campus, with or without federal regulation." They predicted that "graduate students will continue to pursue their economic interests through union organizing," noting that "even those who live the life of the mind must eat."



# Union says no to austerity contract

By PETER HOGNESS

"Increasingly, what we're looking at is a tale of two universities – one in which management is able to reward itself, and another where faculty and staff are left with the scraps," said Mike Fabricant, PSC vice president for senior colleges and a member of the union's bargaining team. "Management increased its own salaries a year ago, and it's been almost two years since our contract expired."

"With the start of a new semester," Fabricant said, "we need management to act on our issues with the same sense of urgency that they acted for themselves."

Throughout the summer, the PSC continued to press management at the bargaining table. Both sides have now finished presenting their demands and have discussed many areas in detail, but management has still not made an economic offer.

"After the rebuilding we've seen at CUNY in the last few years, it would be a terrible mistake to ask us to accept an austerity contract," said Barbara Bowen, the PSC's president and chief negotiator.

Four days after the 1,000-person rally, PSC member activists and Bowen met with Chancellor Gold-

## Welfare Fund a key issue

stein in an informal session on contract issues. Members spoke about how Welfare Fund benefit reductions have hurt them personally, and how they have weakened CUNY's ability to recruit. On June 30 PSC officers presented Goldstein with petitions signed by thousands of members, plus more than one thousand postcards from retirees, all demanding increased WF funding.

The June 28 meeting of the CUNY Board of Trustees saw a silent protest, with PSC activists holding up placards during the meeting that spelled out "NO AUSTERITY." On June 30 the union delivered thousands of letters to 80th Street supporting equity for part-timers.

### DISCUSSIONS

Some municipal unions have asked for a declaration of impasse or sought arbitration to resolve their contract disputes, feeling deadlocked at the table, but the PSC bargaining team has found it productive to continue discussions with CUNY management. "The chancellor is on record in favor of competitive salaries and conditions at

CUNY – now we need an economic offer that makes that a reality," said Bowen. The offer from CUNY must be approved by the City and State, and is often influenced by settlements with other public employees.

Since last fall, several unions of New York State government workers have reached contract settlements, including faculty and staff at SUNY. Members of United University Professions approved a four-year contract worth 15% in salary improvements over the life of the

agreement, including an \$800 cash bonus that later becomes part of base pay. Similar agreements were reached with the State's two largest unions, CSEA and PEF.

This summer NYC police and fire unions dogged Mayor Bloomberg with noisy protests at public events. The PBA has asked for arbitration, while the UFA said in August that its talks are at an impasse. Last March the United Federation of Teachers had asked for a declaration of impasse, but after a September 9 bargaining session, the union said that there had been some progress on non-economic issues.

The three unions and others, including the PSC, have been pressing for better terms than those of the City's settlement with DC 37, the largest municipal union: a three-year contract worth up to 6% with a \$1,000 bonus that does not become part base pay – partly funded by reduced pay for newly hired workers.

In September, the DC 37 executive board voted to seek a re-opening of its contract to deal with a growing gap in the finances of its welfare fund. "This development underlines the urgency of securing adequate Welfare Fund contributions as part of our contract settlement," said Bowen.



PSC members said their piece silently at the June 28 Trustees' meeting.

# CCNY building in trouble

By PETER HOGNESS

## Crumbling concrete, rusted steel

"The contract says that management has to provide you with a safe workplace," PSC President Barbara Bowen told the meeting at City College. "At a minimum, that means the building has to *not* fall down."

There was nervous laughter in response, because most of those at the September 9 meeting work in CCNY's Marshak Science Building. The Marshak building has deteriorated so badly that, according to consultants for both CUNY and the PSC, the building's structural integrity cannot be guaranteed without prompt remedial action.

### GRIEVANCE FILED

"The union chapter has been working on the situation at Marshak for the better part of a year, in response to continual complaints from our members who work there," said CCNY Chapter Chair Steve Leberstein. "But City College management has refused to discuss the issue, except marginally."

The union therefore filed a grievance to obtain all pertinent documents on the Marshak building. "We got the documents at the end of May," Leberstein said, "and the

most recent engineering reports were so alarming that the PSC commissioned its own independent experts to review them."

Those experts included Weidlinger Associates, whose CEO heads a national association of structural engineers. "Marshak will likely reach a state where basic life safety can no longer be assured in a few years," the firm concluded, "unless a total renovation is undertaken or an immediate solution is implemented" to slow down the damage.

Infiltration of water from Marshak's exterior is the main thing weakening the structure. "When water gets through, the steel reinforcing rods can corrode," explained Joan Greenbaum, co-chair of the PSC's Health and Safety Committee. The result is crumbling concrete and rusted steel.

To buy more time, CUNY is planning to build a glass curtain wall around the entire building. "It would be a glass envelope," said Leberstein. "It would not make the building stronger, but it would keep the rain out." That would slow the deterioration of concrete and steel – but could limit ventilation, making Mar-

shak's severe problems with indoor air quality even worse.

The September 9 meeting of the PSC chapter at CCNY was held to bring members up to date. "Information vital to people's well-being was not forthcoming from the college administration," Leberstein said. "We had to let members know what we had learned."

### NO INFORMATION

"It bothers me that planning was very far along, but most people knew nothing about the glass curtain wall," said Health and Safety Co-Chair Dave Kotelchuck.

Weidlinger Associates told the PSC that the glass curtain wall could in fact extend the life of the building – as long as it is built without delay: "Our concurrence is contingent on the implementation of this plan by 2005 at the latest."

Olmsted Environmental Services' review for the union pointed to a different health threat: extensive mold colonization throughout the building. "Growth of mold in [the] ventilation units provides an unlimited source of mold spores that is very difficult to clean," Olmsted stated. It

concluded that "complete gut renovation of all floors down to the concrete [and] structural steel with replacement of all mechanical systems," such as fans and ventilation ducts, should be considered, and that demolition of the building might even be required.

"When you add the issue of the mold," Kotelchuck told the September 9 meeting, "it's not clear to me that you can go ahead with the glass curtain wall unless the mold is cleaned up first." Sealing the building would make its currently poor ventilation even worse, Kotelchuck explained; for example, you could not open a window for more air.

"Exposure to elevated levels of mold can cause...allergy, upper respiratory irritation, sinusitis and eye irritation," the Olmsted report notes. "Some occupants may not tolerate this building," it concluded, especially since prolonged exposure to mold can increase sensitivity.

"If anyone feels ill from working in their environment, they should take action immediately," said the Higher Education Officer Chapter Chair Jean Weisman. "Document it, talk to a grievance officer, and it's certainly logical to ask for a transfer."

"That isn't a solution at all for the working scientists," said Jonathan Levitt of the Biology Department, "because we can't just pick up our work and take it elsewhere." Any move inevitably disrupts research,

he later told *Clarion*, and extended delays can jeopardize a career. "Any move to new space or remediation must be done as quickly as possible," he emphasized.

"These are complex issues," Kotelchuck acknowledged. Bowen added, "We understand that for many, your whole life's work is in that building."

### PSC demands release of engineering reports

Chapter members raised many other concerns, from soot and volatile chemical fumes, to how firefighters would respond to a fire in a building encased in glass. A committee of faculty and staff who work in the Marshak building was formed after the meeting, to monitor the situation and advise on the best course of action.

### GUT RENOVATION?

A key issue, said Greenbaum, is to answer the question raised by Omstead as to whether a gut renovation of the building is necessary. On the glass curtain wall, she said, the two key questions are how soon it would be built and how it would integrate with the ventilation of the existing structure.

The union is demanding answers to these questions, as well as a complete and public timetable showing how CUNY will fix the building's problems once and for all.

For copies of the Weidlinger and Olmsted reports, contact Steve Leberstein at 212-650-7274.



# Parenting at CUNY is a struggle

By TOMIO GERON

In many ways, CarolAnn Daniel is one of those CUNY success stories.

She graduated from Hunter College and the Hunter School of Social Work, becoming a licensed social worker. She went on to the doctoral program in social welfare at the CUNY Graduate Center, and became an assistant professor at Brooklyn College.

Despite the pay cut from her previous job as a social worker, she loves the work she does at CUNY – particularly her work with students.

"I feel like I want to give back," she says, "because I know I could never have paid for my education myself. And as the only person of color in my department, I feel a sense of obligation to my students."

But after she had her second child last year, Daniel was forced to go on Medicaid to provide health benefits for herself and her family – and ended up qualifying for food stamps. Her story is a sobering account of the difficulties encountered by faculty and staff who are new parents.

## UNAFFORDABLE

CUNY offers no paid maternity or paternity leave for its employees. Unpaid leave is available, but the only source of income for new mothers who take time off is whatever sick time they have accumulated and not yet used up. This must be prescribed by a doctor; new fathers or adoptive parents cannot use paid

## Childcare, family leave at issue



Avi Bornstein, associate professor at John Jay, Deadra Brown, a writing assistant at BMCC, and their daughter Aziza.

sick leave in this way.

Prof. Daniel had six weeks of paid sick leave – but that was not enough. "I had a very difficult, traumatic birth experience, so I could not have gone back after six weeks even if I wanted to," she explains. "It took forty stitches in my stomach. Once I left the hospital, I had to hire a nurse for two weeks to lift the baby and to help me get in and out of bed. It was more than a month before I could walk without help."

## Parental leave: CUNY's current policies

CUNY currently offers no paid maternity or paternity leave. The PSC is demanding that CUNY provide five months of paid parental leave, with full benefits.

But today, when a child is born, only mothers can take paid time off, and only by using sick leave as prescribed by a doctor.

After your sick time runs out, your health coverage may be continued if you take an unpaid leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). An FMLA leave can be used for pregnancy or care of a newborn child, up to a total of 12 weeks per year. Fathers and adoptive parents also qualify.

## UNION DEMAND

But CUNY requires that an FMLA leave run concurrently with paid sick time, as they are permitted to do under current law. Thus, if you have 7 weeks of paid sick time, an FMLA leave would give you only an additional 5 weeks of health benefits.

In current contract talks, the PSC is demanding that paid sick leave and FMLA leave not run concurrently. With this change, an employee with 7 weeks of paid sick time would get an additional 12 weeks of health coverage, for a total of 19 weeks.

Finally, the contract provides for childcare leaves for up to a year. Such leaves are unpaid and include no benefits. If you take an unpaid childcare leave after your FMLA leave runs out, you can only maintain your health insurance through large monthly payments under COBRA – usually hundreds of dollars a month.

Many important details can't be included in this short outline. For application deadlines and additional information, call your campus personnel office. You can also take your questions to PSC Pension & Welfare Benefits Director Clarissa Gilbert Weiss (cweiss@pscmail.org or 212-354-1252), and it's always good to ask colleagues about their experiences. —PH

With no salary, Daniel could not afford the hundreds of dollars a month required to maintain her health insurance once her CUNY coverage came to an end. Her husband is a professional musician, with no health benefits and a highly variable income.

"The biggest and most traumatic part of this last year was having to choose when to go to the doctor and for what reason," she says. "Having to choose what illnesses deserve to get seen by a doctor was very stressful." And that's how Prof. CarolAnn Daniel came to apply for Medicaid. "If we'd had a little higher income, we wouldn't even have had that option," she points out.

## IT AIN'T EUROPE

After being approved, she took one of her children for a checkup. "I had filled out the Medicaid card, and it asks you to list your job and so on – and the woman working there, right away I saw what she was thinking," Daniel recalls. "So I said to her, 'Look, I'm not cheating the system. I'm on maternity leave now and so I have no salary.' Her eyes got wide and she said, 'Oh, my god, that's terrible!' She was from Europe, and in her country you get months of paid benefits. 'I can't believe this,' she said. 'And you're a professor!' I started to get embarrassed, because you know we weren't the only people there." Daniel was later found eligible for food stamps, though she decided not to sign up.

After two semesters off, Daniel is back at work at Brooklyn College, but she thinks some changes are needed in CUNY's policies for new parents. "Under the current policy, it feels like you're being punished for having a child," says Daniel. "I don't know how they're going to hold and attract people who want to

have kids. I really think we should get a semester of both pay and benefits." That is one of the PSC's demands in the current round of contract talks, with a proposal for five months of family leave with full pay and health insurance.

Daniel adds that there is inadequate information about the policies currently in place. She says she is angry that she was not told that the time she took under the Family and Medical Leave Act would extend her CUNY health benefits for a period beyond the end of her paid sick leave (see sidebar). "I don't know whether to be mad at CUNY or at the union," she told *Clarion*. While FMLA leave is unpaid, in her case it meant an additional six weeks of CUNY health coverage – but she only learned this months later, and had cancelled a doctor visit for financial reasons.

"Certainly it's management's job to give employees this kind of important information," said Nancy Romer, a member of the Brooklyn College PSC chapter leadership. "But the union also needs to do better. Because of the lack of hiring new faculty, in most union chapters it's been years since we had many members of childbearing age, and our activists haven't always been as informed as we should be. But that's changing – and part of the reason is that younger members are coming into the PSC, and they're speaking out."

## UNION FORUM

In May the union sponsored a forum on childcare and family leave issues, where CarolAnn Daniel and other members shared their experiences and talked about the changes they think are needed. "There was a lot of frustration and exasperation expressed with how difficult it is to

take a leave and keep benefits and put food on the table," said Nicole McDaniel, assistant professor of Biology at Bronx Community College. "But there was also a lot of energy, and a sense of being able to do something about it."

Penny Lewis, an instructor in the Social Science Department at BMCC and one of the organizers of the meeting, said that the discussion would inform the PSC negotiating team as it bargains for improvements in family life issues.

## CHILDCARE

The other hot item was childcare. "We need a low-cost, affordable childcare option for faculty and staff," said Cheryl Fish, associate professor of English at BMCC and a single mother who paid for private childcare for five years for her child while working at CUNY. "It's a national problem. Access to affordable childcare and needs of women's life-cycle aren't taken into account."

CUNY currently offers childcare services for students on some campuses, but not for faculty and staff. Other public universities go further. U. of Wisconsin and U. of Hawaii campuses, for example, offer on-campus childcare to faculty and staff.

The SUNY faculty/staff union, United University Professions, won additional funds in its most recent contract that can be used for childcare. Employees can now receive \$200 to \$600 per year in employer contributions to a "Dependent Care Advantage Account," which can be used to pay for childcare or elder care.

The fact that family care needs are not limited to children was raised at the May PSC forum. "It should be expanded care leave, whether elder care or childcare," said Robin Isserles, assistant professor of social science at BMCC. With baby boomers reaching retirement age, she said, "there are going to be a lot of faculty members who have to take care of family."

"I have no kids, so I'm not directly involved," said Claudio Mazzatenta, assistant professor of biology at BCC. "But I think this should be one of the main issues of this contract campaign."

Isserles, who took one semester of unpaid leave to care for her newborn child in Spring 2003, said there are other issues that CUNY needs to address as well. "CUNY needs to create spaces for women who are nursing," said Isserles. "I had a terrible experience because I share an office and it was uncomfortable." Private space for breast-feeding or use of a breast pump is essential, she said.

"It's part of a broader question of how to change campuses to accommodate parents," said Lewis. She thinks CUNY has a long way to go.



# New administrator at PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund

By JOANNA SABATINI

## 30 years of experience

After a long and careful search, the PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund trustees have chosen Larry Morgan to be the Fund's new general administrator.

Morgan arrives with three decades of experience in leadership positions at labor health and pension funds in New York City. He replaces Norma Frey, who retired on August 31 after 30 years of dedicated service. Morgan spent much of August working with Frey and the trustees to set priorities for the days ahead.

"We are in very challenging times and that's why we are delighted to have someone who is as qualified and experienced as Larry Morgan," said Steve London, Welfare Fund executive officer and PSC first vice president. "As we press to increase the Fund's revenues in this round of contract bargaining, it's good to know that the administration of the fund is in good hands."

### PLANNING

Two years after earning a master's in business administration from Boston University, Morgan got a master's degree in health services

administration from Cornell in 1974. In that same year, he landed a job at New York City's largest public employees' union, AFSCME District Council 37. He was director of planning for the union's health and welfare fund for 10 years.

After serving as administrator of health and pension benefits for District 65/UAW, Morgan went on to the hospital workers' union SEIU Local 1199. He spent 10 years as executive director of 1199 Home Care Funds, where he developed programs providing health, pension and education benefits for 25,000 home care workers. Most recently he was chief financial officer at the clothing and textile union UNITE.

Morgan speaks with enthusiasm about his arrival at the Welfare Fund and the tasks awaiting him as administrator of its day-to-day operations.

"I'll be looking at the benefits one at a time, trying to ensure that we are delivering the best available benefits for the money," he told *Clarion*. "That means negotiating the most favorable terms with carri-

ers, and nurturing good relationships with our providers." Morgan also aims to assist with maximizing contributions to the Fund.

"My first impression is that this fund is pretty much under control in terms of implementing the basics," Morgan said. "For example, ensuring that there are incentives for people to use generic drugs."

### COMMUNICATION

New projects will include issuing a new Summary Plan Description with updated information on all benefits and developing a Web site for the Fund, which has until now not had one of its own. "We have dedicated staff members," said Morgan, "and when you couple that with improved communication, you've got a good strategy for serving our members."

Advocating for members with insurance carriers is an essential task, and one that will get new attention, Morgan said. He also wants the

Fund to be a place where members can turn for answers on topical questions like the predictable confusion over Medicare's new prescription discount cards.

### Advocating for members is a key task, says Morgan.

"One of the things I anticipate that I will enjoy is working with a very engaged Board of Trustees," Morgan said. "I've been in situations where trustees have to be convinced of the importance of their welfare fund. That isn't the case here - everybody knows how important it is, and it looks like the Board of Trustees really gets involved in the management of the Fund."

Academic labor is not a new field for him. "I enjoy teaching," said Morgan, who has worked as an adjunct faculty member at Cornell's Institute of Labor Relations and at the College of New Rochelle. In fact, teacher unionism seems to run in his family. His wife is Julie Kushner, NYC sub-regional director for the UAW, whose organizing work has focused on private universities, while his stepson Ole is an organizer with the AFT in Connecticut.

# CUNY transit benefit scheduled to begin

Persistent union pressure and hard work by CUNY's Office of Faculty and Staff Relations has finally produced results. Enrollment for the CUNY TransitBenefit Transportation Spending Account is about to begin, and as *Clarion* went to press, CUNY announced its plan for implementation of the program.

Interested employees will be encouraged to enroll by November so that pre-tax payroll deductions can begin by the first pay date in December 2004. Those who enroll will receive a Transportation Spending Account debit card (TSA card) issued by Chase Bank, the fiscal agent, which can be used to purchase NYC Transit Authority MetroCards at TA vending machines, usable on NYC Transit Authority subways and buses and on express buses in New York City.

For more information on the program and to get enrollment forms, see your College Benefits Officer or go to the PSC website ([www.psc-cuny.org](http://www.psc-cuny.org)) for a link to CUNY's online site.

# PSC active at AFT convention

By PETER HOGNESS

## Focus on higher ed, Iraq war

For the PSC, this year's American Federation of Teachers convention meant:

- Over 200 members who helped develop resolutions
- 54 delegates who attended
- 28 proposed resolutions (of a convention total of 100)
- 21 resolutions approved or recommended to the AFT Executive Council
- 2 resolutions that were blocked or rejected
- 4 days of working with locals from across the country
- and one intense debate about Iraq.

The AFT's biannual convention was held July 14-17 in Washington, DC, and the PSC delegation was one of the most active, as the AFT defined its policy on a range of issues.

A PSC resolution in support of free public higher education was unanimously approved in committee. "I was delighted that the AFT is giving its support to free higher education," said delegate Dave Kotelchuck. "This is something the PSC has favored for quite a while, and in the [convention's] higher education committee it had very broad support."

The story was similar for a PSC resolution in support of the DREAM Act, a bill that would ease restrictions on college access for undocu-

mented immigrant students. "It had strong backing," said Jim Perlstein, of the local's Solidarity Committee. "It just sailed through."

PSC delegates had common concerns with those from other locals on fairness for part-time and non-tenure-track faculty, and the convention adopted a PSC resolution urging that conditions of contingent faculty be considered in decisions on an institution's accreditation.

### Support for more access to college for immigrant students

Janice Cline, chapter chair at York, attended the committee considering a PSC resolution in support of H.R. 40, a bill by Rep. John Conyers calling for a federal commission to study the question of reparations for slavery. "It pleased me that this resolution, which was shot down at the last AFT convention two year ago, was passed unanimously in committee," said Cline.

Other PSC resolutions addressed issues from voting rights to marriage equality to the need for affordable childcare.

The debate over Iraq was particularly intense. "At the last convention, we had about 30 people come to an anti-war meeting," said Penny Lewis, an instructor in the social science department at BMCC. "This time we had about 300." Locals from L.A., Philadelphia and elsewhere

brought forward resolutions proposing a change in AFT policy on Iraq. "It was gratifying to be working with locals from all over the country, locals that we had met at the convention two years ago," Lewis said.

The key issue in the war debate was whether to call for a withdrawal of US troops, as was recently done by other US unions such as SEIU and AFSCME. Tom Mooney, President of the Ohio Federation of Teachers, told the international committee that he agreed the war had begun with deceit - but he opposed calls for US forces to withdraw. "It's irresponsible to say, just withdraw," Mooney contended.

PSC delegate Tony O'Brien responded to this argument on the convention floor. The idea that the US military is what stands between Iraq and chaos, O'Brien said, is "a form of the 'white man's burden' ideology, the discredited colonialist idea of a Western 'civilizing mission' to rescue black and brown peoples from their supposed incapacity for self-development." He criticized the AFT leadership's resolution as a "blank check for the US and British armies to stay in Iraq indefinitely."

Anti-war resolutions were defeated in committee, and a pro-withdrawal resolution was defeated on the floor. A slight change to the AFT leadership's resolution

was passed by delegates.

One of the most dramatic moments came when John Kerry addressed the convention - and anti-war delegates from several locals silently held up three banners, with appeals such as "John Kerry: Say No to War." They wore blue Kerry t-shirts, to make it clear that they were not arguing against the AFT's endorsement of the Democratic nominee, but rather were asking him to speak out forcefully against

criticized Bush's tax breaks for the wealthy, and said that money would be better spent expanding health coverage to all Americans.

While AFT delegates were divided on Iraq, there was agreement on the need to protect civil liberties and academic freedom at home. The convention passed a PSC resolution against a proposed government political monitoring board for international area studies programs.

Finally, this AFT convention was also a moment of transition. Sandra Feldman, the former UFT president who headed the AFT for the past seven years, told delegates she was stepping down due to a recurrence of breast cancer and the demands of



PSC delegate Shirley Rausher of BMCC takes the mike at the convention.

the war. "Kerry definitely saw our message, as did all the convention delegates," said Romer.

In his speech to the convention, Kerry blasted Bush's policies on education, pledging an end to "broken promises on funding" of the No Child Left Behind Act. Kerry also

her medical treatment.

Elected as the AFT's new president was its former secretary-treasurer, Edward McElroy. Nat LaCoeur was elected secretary-treasurer and Toni Cortese, an AFT vice president from New York, was elected as executive vice president.



# Labor won health care for all in Hawaii

By DAVID BUXENBAUM

The citizens of the offshore state of Hawaii have something that millions of mainlanders lack – and it's more important than beaches and sunshine. They have health insurance.

What is noteworthy is that they got it in 1974 because of a union that cared enough for the health of everybody to include everybody, a union that had the militancy and the muscle to write the legislation and see it through the legislature to become law.

The union in question, the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU), has a long history of militancy and fighting for social justice for all. They most recently faced down the Bush administration when Bush threatened to use the Navy to take over the docks in the last round of contract negotiations.

## WIDER COVERAGE

In Hawaii the ILWU wrote legislation called the Prepaid Health Care Law of 1974. They crafted the law in such a way that as of 1994, 94% of Hawaiians had health coverage. They then led the struggle to have the law enacted. From that day to this, in spite of the inflationary pressure of the profit-driven health industry in our country, the people of Hawaii enjoy better and fuller coverage than any other state in the nation.

Hawaii ranks near the top compared to other states in life expectancy and low infant mortality. The plan requires employers to pay into the plan for every employee who worked 20 hours or more. The employees pays into the plan no more than 1.5% of their monthly wages.

Even more radical is the provision that any health insurance company that wanted to do business in Hawaii had to accept all comers. Since for-profit insurance companies do not like to insure people who are not 100% healthy, this prevented "cherry-picking." As a result, non-profits like Kaiser-Permanente were left as the main insurers, which helped to keep costs low. When some employers

## An example to learn from



Dr. Elliot Kalauawa and a patient covered by Hawaii's State Health Insurance Program.

tried to evade the requirements by hiring more part-timers, the legislature created the State Health Insurance Program. This is open to all who do not have insurance; participants pay premiums based on income. Additional legislation has been passed to add those not covered by Medicare, Medicaid, or private insurance, and the law emphasized comprehensive, preventive care.

In 1994, health care programs for Medicaid and other low-income groups were converted into managed care plans. Compulsory auto insurance and workers' compensation also foot some health care bills, and the combined result of all of these plus the 1974 law is that Hawaiians have the most complete coverage of any state in the union.

When the percentage of the gross state product spent on health care in Hawaii is compared with figures for other states, the

advantages of the Hawaiian system stand out. In the mid-1990s the national average was 14%, while for Hawaii it was 9%. In other words, more coverage for less money. Survey after survey demonstrated that the majority of the small business people approved of the system.

## LABOR'S OWN BILL

In New York City the number of people without health insurance is now approaching an appalling 27% of our population. What Raglan George Jr., executive director of AFSCME District Council 1707, wrote last year is still right on the money:

"I say it's the labor movement itself that should write its own national health legislation. This would put labor at the front door, not back door, of health policies. It is the flipside of labor having its own people run for public office, rather than relying on others to protect our interests. Labor has the expertise to write this historic piece of legis-

lation. Labor unions and their negotiated benefits fund leaders have more experience in health care benefits than anyone else in the country."

When Bill Clinton, newly elected as president, attempted to write new national health care reform legislation, the newspapers ran many articles about the Hawaii experience. The headlines read:

**Hawaii Ranks Healthiest in National Survey** (*USA Today*)

**Hawaiians Like Their Health Care System** (*San Francisco Chronicle*)

**Health Care in Paradise** (*St. Louis Post-Dispatch*)

**Hawaii Offers Look at State of Full Coverage** (*USA Today*)

**Health Care Is Called a Model for U.S.** (*The New York Times*)

**Hula and Health Care** (*San Francisco Chronicle*)

**Hawaii Shows It Can Offer Health Insurance for All** (*The New York Times*)

**While Mainland Debates, Hawaii's System Works** (*USA Today*)

The insurance and drug companies unleashed an unprecedented effort to bury the Clinton initiative. They won, and also buried the example of the successful plan in Hawaii. It remains the most progressive of any health care system in the nation and should be publicized. And, of course, due recognition should be given to that most progressive and democratic institution, the International Longshore and Warehouse Union.

*David Buxenbaum is editor of the DC 1707 Voice, newspaper of AFSCME District Council 1707, whose 30,000 members include day care workers and home makers in NYC.*

*If you'd like to join other PSC members in working for health care reform, contact Jim Perlstein of the Solidarity Committee, at [jperlstein@aol.com](mailto:jperlstein@aol.com) or 212-354-1251 x227. Francine Brewer chairs the Retirees Chapter health care reform committee and represents the PSC in a coalition on the issue called Rekindling Reform; she can be reached at [frangail@earthlink.net](mailto:frangail@earthlink.net).*

## LABOR IN BRIEF

### Sikhs seek justice on the job

Employees in two New York government agencies have won the right to wear religious head coverings on the job. In June, the New York City Commission on Human Rights said that the NYPD had violated the civil rights of a Sikh traffic agent by threatening to fire him if he refused to remove his turban.

This month the Transit Authority resolved disputes with TWU Local 100 that arose when a Sikh subway motorman was ordered to wear a TA cap instead of a turban and female Muslim bus drivers were reassigned after refusing to put TA caps over their head scarves. The TA will now provide both male Sikhs and female Muslims with fabric that matches their blue uniforms for their head coverings. Employees wearing turbans will attach a pin with a TA logo while the fabric for scarves will have the logo woven into it.

### Teamsters head comes out for a national health care system

James Hoffa, president of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, has announced his support for a comprehensive health care system run by the federal government. "We need a national health care system, and we need it now," the Teamsters president declared in a September 13 speech to the Detroit Economic Club.

Many labor leaders have long supported a national health care plan, but when the more conservative Teamsters head took this stand it made headlines.

Hoffa said he believes "the employer-based health care system is crumbling" and is making it hard for America to compete internationally. He asserted that the problem is "clear to everyone except the current administration." Hoffa praised the CEO of General Motors for supporting a national plan.

A poll released the same week, conducted by Opinion Research Corp., found that 67% of those surveyed think the US needs the kind of "guarantee" of health care that is

provided by public systems in Canada, Britain and elsewhere. Even when health-care in Canada was defined as "socialized medicine," 61% still chose it over the current US system.

### Unions: end occupation of Iraq

On September 1, the Communications Workers of America (CWA) convention called for an end to the US occupation of Iraq. "CWA demands that the president abandon his failed policy (of preemptive war) which has made our nation less – not more – secure, and support our troops and their families by bringing our troops home safely now," the resolution states.

An anti-war position has rapidly become the mainstream view in US labor. Other unions calling for an end to the occupation include the AFL-CIO's largest affiliate, the Service Employees International Union (SEIU); the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME); and the American Postal Workers Union (APWU).

## Labor Goes to the Movies

The PSC is proud to announce the new season of its labor film series. Each screening will feature a PSC member and special guests.

Mark your calendars for the upcoming dates:

- Oct. 15** – *Homeland Insecurity: A one-person performance* by Benjamin Franklin Carney III
- Nov. 12** – *I'm All Right Jack* (John Boulting, 1959)
- Dec. 10** – *Norma Rae* (Martin Ritt, 1979)
- Jan. 22** – *Battle of Chile* (Patricio Guzmán, 1975-76) Special Saturday Afternoon Screening
- Feb. 18** – *The Agronomist* (Jonathan Demme, 2004)
- March 11** – *Yo, la peor de todas* (I, The Worst of All) (Maria Luisa Bemberg, 1990)
- April 15** – *The General* (Buster Keaton, Clyde Bruckman, 1927)
- May 13** – *CUNY Student Films*

All screenings at the Center For Worker Education (CCNY) 99 Hudson Street 6th Floor  
Fridays at 6:00PM (EXCEPT AS NOTED) Donation: \$2.00  
See the PSC Web site for more details: [www.psc-cuny.org](http://www.psc-cuny.org).



## CALENDAR

**MONDAY, OCTOBER 4 / 1:00 pm:** PSC Retirees Chapter. President Barbara Bowen on "The State of the Union." CUNY Graduate Center, Room C201-202.

**TUESDAY, OCTOBER 5 / 7:00 pm:** CLT Chapter general membership meeting. Location to be announced. For more information, contact Shelly Mendlinger at 212-354-1252.

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 9 / Help beat Bush in Pennsylvania!** Sign up for the PSC bus trip to Montgomery County, PA, to walk a precinct with local union members and encourage union households to vote. Buses leave from the PSC office (25 W. 43rd St.) at 7:30 am, return to NYC by 5:00 pm. Refreshments, lunch provided; training on the bus. To sign up or for info, contact Cecelia McCall (cmccall@psmail.org or 212-354-1252), with name, phone and e-mail. (See also 10/23, 10/30.)

**TUESDAY, OCTOBER 12 / 6:00 pm:** PSC Solidarity Committee. At the PSC office, 25 West 43rd Street. For more information, contact Jim Perlstein at jperlstein@bassmeadow.com or 212-354-1252.

**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 14 / 6:00 pm:** PSC Peace and Justice Committee. At the PSC office, 25 West 43rd Street. For more information, contact Nancy Romer at nancyromer@verizon.net or Doug Ferrari at 212-354-1252.

**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 14 / 3:30 pm:** PSC health & safety workshop. Learn about mold problems and indoor air quality. At the PSC office, 25 West 43rd St. For info, call 212-354-1252 or e-mail jgreenbaum@psmail.org.

**FRIDAY, OCTOBER 15 / 6:00 pm:** Labor Goes to the Movies presents a special live performance by Prof. Benjamin Franklin Carney, *Homeland Insecurity*. A 10th-generation American, Carney's family history reveals a nation full of tall tales, scandals, murders and lies. But as Benjamin Franklin said, "A lie stands on one leg, the truth on two." At the CCNY Center for Worker Education, 6th Floor, 99 Hudson Street, at Franklin.

**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 17 / starts 9:00-11:00 am:** Making Strides Against Breast Cancer, fundraising walk for American Cancer Society. For registration info, call 800-ACS-2345 or see www.cancer.org/stridesonline.

**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 21 / 3:30 pm:** PSC health & safety workshop. Learn about fire safety and emergency evacuation plans. At the PSC office, 25 West 43rd St. For info, call 212-354-1252 or e-mail jgreenbaum@psmail.org.

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 23 / Help beat Bush in Pennsylvania!** For info on PSC bus trip to Allentown, PA, contact Cecelia McCall (cmccall@psmail.org or 212-354-1252).

**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 28 / 3:30 pm:** PSC health & safety workshop. Learn how to solve problems at your campus. At the PSC office, 25 West 43rd St. For info, call 212-354-1252 or e-mail jgreenbaum@psmail.org.

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 30 / Help beat Bush in Pennsylvania!** For info on a PSC bus trip call Cecelia McCall at 212-354-1252.

**FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 5 / 3:00 pm:** "First Fridays" meeting of the PSC Part-Timers Committee. At the PSC office, 25 W. 43rd St. For more info, call Marcia Newfield at 212-354-1252.



By **BARBARA BOWEN**  
PSC President

**T**he current year could be a watershed for CUNY. For the first time since the late 1960s, new full-time faculty have joined the University in large enough numbers to form a critical mass. With them comes a chance for renewal that we haven't had in many years.

The new hires bring the academic training and political experience of their generation: intellectually and politically, CUNY could be transformed.

This month's column looks back in order to go forward, examining what the PSC has done in the past year. For if the arrival of so many junior faculty creates a unique opportunity, that opportunity exists only because of the steady work under tough conditions by the *current* full-time and part-time faculty and professional staff – who have kept this university alive despite many attempts to kill it.

An assessment of the union's work in the last 12 months is necessarily an assessment of the political conditions in which the union worked. The most immediate issue is the City's labor austerity agenda, which

has delayed this round of contract negotiations and has been challenged by the PSC and other unions seeking fair contracts. But there are also other forces: a trend in

higher education – very visible at CUNY – to replace the collegial model with a corporate one; a state government that has been called the most dysfunctional in the country; an unjustified war that is draining public budgets and creating pressure for funding cuts; and the Bush administration's weakening of protections for working people, on everything from healthcare to overtime pay.

The PSC's responsibility is to defend its members' interests against the local effects of these larger forces – fighting against depressed salaries and reduced benefits, challenging unfair policies on the campuses – and at the same time to express powerfully the members' vision of the university and public life we could have. Some of the highlights from 2003-04 include:

## THE UNION

## 2003-2004: A

- tangible progress on ending the 15-year trend of declining City and State budgets for CUNY
- a contract campaign that drove home the message that we need more than a minimal settlement
- a landslide victory in the union representation election among Research Foundation employees at LaGuardia
- a growing influence in shaping the agendas of our national and state affiliates on higher education, labor and the war
- new initiatives for our own members – professional workshops and grants, summer pay for department chairs, diversity initiatives on campus, a junior faculty project.

And the union has done much more. What follows is only a summary, just part of what hundreds of PSC activists have accomplished:

## THE CONTRACT

The renaissance at CUNY is illusory without competitive salaries, restored benefits and improvements in working conditions and equity. PSC members spent the year building our case, at the bargaining table and on the campuses, for a contract that continues to move the University forward.

Your voices were heard in a year-long series of actions: we rallied in an October thunderstorm for fair treatment for adjuncts, in the January cold for fair workloads, in April with our children for decent childcare, in May for increased salaries and Welfare Fund benefits, and in June against an austerity contract. Collectively we produced thousands of petition signatures and letters demanding restoration of the Welfare Fund and adjunct equity.

Throughout, we've had support from other City unions. The PSC negotiates for a contract not just with CUNY management, but within the entire political arena of the City and State. The City has called for austerity for labor – despite a \$1.9 billion budget surplus in fiscal year 2004. But in a year of gridlocked City labor negotiations, the PSC stood out for its steady escalation of pressure. That positions us well as we enter what we hope will be the final phase of negotiations this fall and winter.

## LEGISLATION

As a public-employee union, the PSC is necessarily involved in the legislative and political structure. Other articles in this issue of *Clarion* summarize the year's legislative work and the union's growing political influence; what I'd like to highlight is the richness of union members' discussions about the meaning of that involvement, and the growing sophistication of the union's political work. PSC members have become known for a particular brand of advocacy that combines the habit of research with the passion of deep political commitments. In 2003-04, legislative action was something the union did virtually every day, whether it

was making calls to legislators or planning the observance of CUNY Day or providing testimony at City Council hearings.

## SUPPORT FOR PROFESSIONAL LIFE

In 2003-04 the PSC added a new wing to its work. Although the union has always had a commitment to enhancing members' professional lives, I feel it had underestimated both the potential and the need for intellectual support that was independent of management's agenda. How could we use the unique resources of an academic union to support the academic lives of the different constituencies within the PSC? The union programs developed in 2003-04, organized and staffed by our own members, got a strong response that suggests that they tapped into long-felt needs:

- HEO/CLT professional development grants – the first program at CUNY to support the intellectual work of the professional staff
- a professional development seminar for adjuncts – focused on the process of applying for full-time positions
- junior faculty project – launched with a day-long conference in March that drew over 200 new faculty for workshops on tenure, publication and union activism

## CHAPTERS AND COMMITTEES

One of the union's goals for 2003-04 was to strengthen the work of the chapters; they are stronger now because many of you have become local activists. What happens in the chapter is often what's most important to us as members: it's there that local policies are challenged and members' rights defended.

Last year saw the PSC chapter at City College battling the administration to disclose information about the safety of a campus building in a scandalous state of decay. Meanwhile the chapter at LaGuardia was challenging the president's plan to include student test scores as part of faculty evaluations, and City Tech organized to demand that management follow the contract and reduce their workload. The Higher Education Officers chapter initiated the first systematic survey documenting the many hours of unpaid work HEOs regularly perform.

Meanwhile, the PSC's reach is extended by a growing roster of union committees, through which members from across the University organize on issues from the racial impact of CUNY admissions policies to support for kidnapped unionists in Colombia.

## FINANCES

The PSC is one of the largest higher education unions in the country, and it continues to be in a sound financial position. Our dues are what allow the union to be active, and the PSC budget for 2003-04 reflected the expanded work of the union – which is described in this review. After a process of open hearings and discussion on the budget, PSC Delegates approved a budget of \$10.1



## Looking back in order to go forward



# year in the life of the PSC

million for Fiscal Year 2003-04. Actual spending came in slightly under that amount, and a planned transfer of funds from the union's reserves proved to be unnecessary. The union's fixed costs include staff salaries and office space rent; our largest expense continues to be the mandatory dues we pay to state and national affiliates, which account for about one-third of our costs.

## INTELLECTUAL AND CULTURAL WORK

Unions have historically been strongest, including on bread-and-butter issues, when they have generated their own cultural and intellectual life. We need bread, and roses too. With a membership of 17,000 scholars, artists, professionals and teachers, the PSC is beautifully positioned to draw spirit and insight from union cultural work. The past year has seen:

- the third season of Labor Goes to the Movies – a series of films about labor, presented in a setting that fosters union solidarity
- a forum on the 50th anniversary of the *Brown* school desegregation decision and its implications for CUNY
- the production of a union newspaper that attracts national attention, eschewing the usual “grip and grin” photos of union leaders for real reporting and good design
- a seminar on women and money, held during Women's History Month

## WELFARE FUND

The Fund is a separate entity from the union – supported by employer contributions, not our dues – but it is clearly a vital union concern. By making painful changes over the last few years, the WF Trustees have wrestled down an annual deficit that was heading toward \$10 million when we took office. That is a major accomplishment. But the truth is that more costs – especially for dental care – have shifted from employer to employee; the pain we feel is real.

The WF made some progress in 2003-04: a settlement with the University that added

\$2.7 million to the WF reserve, an optional buy-up dental plan, and the appointment of an exceptionally qualified top administrator (see p.8). The bottom line, however, is that WF costs continued to rise in 2003-04, while the rate of employer contributions did not. That's why increased WF contributions from CUNY are at the center of the PSC's contract campaign.

## CONTRACT ENFORCEMENT AND DEFENSE OF MEMBERS' RIGHTS

Many of us think that once the contract or a labor law is in place it will be automatically followed. The experience of working at CUNY suggests

and Safety Watchdogs organized to protect members' right to a safe workplace.

The union won solutions to such issues as the failure of one campus to pay adjuncts on time, the failure of another to make timely payments into members' pension funds, the failure of others to pay department chairs for summer work. The union filed over 150 grievances in the 2003-04 academic year, and results included restoration of members' jobs, the granting of tenure and significant awards of back pay.

## ORGANIZING

Between 2000 and 2004, PSC membership increased from 9,400 to 14,700 – a growth of 64%. Two major union campaigns have made the difference: one encourages the 9,000 part-time faculty to become union members; the other seeks to win union benefits and protections for the thousands of colleagues who are paid through the CUNY Research Foundation. In 2003-04 the PSC not only had its second overwhelming election victory, it also won significant gains for RF workers at CUNY's University Applications Processing Center who faced losing their jobs. Worker solidarity, including a one-day strike – the first in PSC history – was a major factor in winning improvements for these workers.

## STATE AND NATIONAL POLICY

The PSC had a real impact on the policies of the larger labor organizations to which we belong. New York State United Teachers (NYSUT) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) are our voice at the state, national and international level; we've worked to make sure that they represent higher education and other issues

important to PSC members. At the biennial convention of the AFT, over one-fourth of the resolutions considered by delegates came from the PSC. By offering successful resolutions, the PSC defined the positions of a million-member union on subjects as varied as indoor air quality and government surveillance of international studies programs.

The PSC has also had a major influence on the positions taken by both the AFT and the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) on the Higher Education Act, considered for renewal by Congress in 2003-04. Within NYSUT, PSC activists have pressed for more resources for higher education legislative work and a sharper focus on the needs of New York's public universities; that change is beginning to happen.

No union is an island, isolated from national policy, and the PSC has joined the mainstream of American labor in opposing Bush's war in Iraq. 2003-04 saw our members taking a leading role in the important new organization, US Labor Against the War, turning out by the hundreds to protest the Republican Convention, and organizing powerfully within the AFT for a more progressive position on the war.

## CUNY POLICY

2003-2004 saw many instances of cooperation between the union and CUNY management to hammer out differences or consult on University policy. But there were some sharp conflicts, too, all of them circling around the problem of corporatization and the increased managerial control that goes with it. The PSC took on the Chancellor's Office over its unilateral proposal to the Legislature to lengthen the untenured period. Along with members of the New York City Council, we publicly criticized the Board of Trustees for awarding over \$2 million in annual raises to the Chancellor, presidents and top staff – at a time when tuition was up and PSC members hadn't had a raise in more than a year.

The union also moved forward in its lawsuit against the University for failing to bargain on intellectual property issues, and in May criticized the proposed new CUNY Master Plan for its lack of support for faculty and staff, its weakness on race, and its over-centralized allocation of funds.

A summary in parts can't do justice to the whole of the union's year. When I think of the year, I think of people: the junior faculty members who instantly became activists in the union; the members of the HEO/CLT Awards committee who stayed till 10 PM to finish their grant selection; the activists who got up at 5:30 AM to make that first train to Albany. Given the bleak political climate we face, there is no guarantee that we will win advances worthy of that commitment. But I know we have begun to build the kind of political force the PSC will need for the long haul, and a culture among members to sustain it. That beginning, plus scores of more immediate victories, makes 2003-04 a success.



Ken Orvidas

otherwise. 2003-2004 saw an increasing focus on contract enforcement, as the PSC intervened to make sure that members' basic rights were being protected. The union made increased use of legal strategies to contest violations, and more members became actively involved in contract enforcement – through workshops, training sessions and grass-roots protests. The PSC Health

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## THE ELECTION

# Why it's a union issue

By JOHN HYLAND  
PSC Treasurer &  
Chair, PSC Solidarity Committee

**L**abor Day was celebrated in a different way this year in New York City, under the influence of November's presidential election. The shift from the traditional parade on Fifth Avenue to a rally during the Republican National Convention reflected an extraordinary urgency felt within organized labor about stopping the Bush agenda.

The NYC Central Labor Council, representing 1.5 million workers, organized a rally to "take back America." The theme was: "Stop Bush from destroying our jobs, healthcare, schools, retirement security and communities." The PSC has had a notable presence at the Labor Day Parade for the last four years, and this year's rally drew a strong contingent of active and retired members.

Across the nation there is a strong sense among a wide range of labor unions that a Bush victory would constitute a deep setback for millions of workers and their families. While many unionists feel that Kerry is a flawed candidate, criticism of the Democrat has largely taken the form of "defeat Bush, then work on Kerry."

This sense of urgency comes from an analysis of the central concerns of organized labor, from healthcare to jobs to the future of the labor movement itself:

**HEALTH CARE:** The Bush record has been one of a trend toward less health care for more money. The number of people in the USA without health insurance has grown by 4 million since 2000, and for the "lucky" workers who have some insurance, the average cost of family coverage has gone up by \$2,700 per year. The PSC's experience with the Welfare Fund is not an anomaly, but part of a deeper process of health care profiteering. Yet Bush won't allow imports of cheaper drugs from Canada, or anything else that would limit drug company profits.

In 2001 Bush proposed an \$11 billion cut to children's health insurance programs, and he insists that this year's 17% hike in the Medicare premium – the largest in the history of the program – must not be rolled back.

**JOBS:** The working class depends, by definition, on its work. The Bush administration's 2004 economic report gave explicit backing to the outsourcing of jobs from the USA, supporting capital's thirst for cheap labor. Bush has



This union banner on Seventh Ave. will stay up until Election Day.

moved to expand pro-business trade deals, to Central and South America (even while "free trade" in drugs from Canada is not allowed).

Trade deals that don't include labor rights lead to a race to the bottom for working people, pitting workers in NYC against workers in Mexico or China. Under Bush, the private sector has lost 2.7 million manufacturing jobs. Bush is the first president since the Depression to oversee a net loss of jobs, and the jobs that are growing are mainly in the low and minimum wage sectors.

**EDUCATION:** We in the PSC are higher education workers. Bush's latest budget cuts \$100 million in spending power from the Perkins loan program, reducing access to college, and threatening public institutions such as CUNY. Federal policies contribute to state budget deficits and push the costs of learning on to students in the form of tuition increases.

Bush's failure to fund the "No Child Left Behind" Act has left K-12 schools struggling – yet he wants to put public funds into voucher schemes.

As Paul Krugman of Princeton and the *NY Times* argues, the strategy is to dismantle the system of public services. The social fabric of mutual obligations and responsibilities is being unraveled intentionally, systematically. This strategy is the context for CUNY's chronic underfunding, contributing to the de-

layed, meager contracts for workers like us who labor for the "whole people" – the public.

**PUBLIC SPENDING:** Since 2001, there has been a shift from a \$230 billion dollar surplus to a \$422 billion deficit. How can there possibly be an adequate system of public services (for all people, not just the rich) in such a situation?

In the midst of the deteriorating conditions for working people in the USA, Bush's government embarked on an adventure in Iraq that results in American deaths, a recruiting campaign for anti-American terrorists, all wrapped up in the American flag, and has drained American resources at the rate of \$130 million a day.

Meanwhile Bush's tax cuts have flowed dramatically to the wealthy, and the combined results leave public services starved. Then a starved public sector is blamed for poor performance. Next comes the recommendation that transferring more resources to the private sector, which caused the problem, will solve the problem. Tax cuts for the rich and service cuts for the rest of us add up to a massive transfer of wealth – in the wrong direction.

**CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS:** It's a basic principle of labor that "an injury to one is an injury to all," but Bush has opposed equal rights time and time again. Justice Depart-

ment lawyers argued against affirmative action in last year's University of Michigan Supreme Court case. Bush has appointed judges and FDA officials who oppose women's reproductive rights – and he's so anti-gay that the leading gay Republican group refused to endorse him.

**RETIREMENT SECURITY:** the Bush administration has been pushing the privatization of Social Security, turning our deferred compensation into fodder for Wall Street speculation. This would remove security from the retirement picture and convert the whole system into a casino crap shoot.

**FREEDOM TO FORM AND TAKE PART IN UNIONS:** Unionized workers have higher average wages, salaries and benefits than non-unionized workers. These increased resources for working people cut into the obscene salaries, benefits and "golden parachutes" of the corporate executive class. When Bush's government rules that workers from airport screeners to graduate assistants cannot join a union, it should come as no surprise. The string of anti-labor decisions from this administration adds up to a campaign to destroy the labor movement. Republican strategist Grover Norquist brags openly that his goal is to "break the unions."

The labor movement in the USA has major issues to address. Fundamentally they are issues of increasing and deepening democracy, which would mobilize and unleash the power of working people to advance their own program. In the immediate situation, the organized labor movement is on the defensive and in an activist mode to defeat the Bush regime and stop the downward spiral.

The PSC's elected leadership invites you to join in the struggle for a presidency more susceptible to working people's pressure. This election is not just of concern to political activists; it will directly affect everyone who works at CUNY. The interests of the PSC – fair compensation and positive working conditions for public higher education's faculty and staff – are the interests of the labor movement and working people – excellent, accessible, affordable higher education. Let's beat the Bush regime, and press the Kerry regime toward an economic, political and cultural program for "the whole people."

For supporting data, see [www.aflcio.org](http://www.aflcio.org) and [www.votenov2.com](http://www.votenov2.com). To get involved, see below.

## GOP goal: dismantle public services

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## Swing state action with the PSC

The results of the presidential election in New York are almost a foregone conclusion: the state's electoral votes will likely go to John Kerry. But Pennsylvania is up for grabs, and the outcome there might even decide the race.

The PSC is organizing three Saturday bus trips to Pennsylvania, to work with local union members on voter

outreach. On October 9, 23 and 30, buses will leave in the morning from the PSC office in Manhattan and return the same evening. (See Calendar on p. 10 for more details.)

Do you want to see a change in the White House? Sign up now to make a difference: contact Cecelia McCall at 212-354-1252 or [cmccall@pscmail.org](mailto:cmccall@pscmail.org).