

Clarion

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



SEPTEMBER 2006

YOUR BENEFITS



**New
in the
contract**

More time
and money
for research

PAGE 9



Gary Schoichet

MORE ROOM, WITH A VIEW

PSC MOVES DOWNTOWN

After decades on West 43rd Street, the PSC and the PSC/CUNY Welfare Fund moved into brand-new offices in Lower Manhattan. The new space, at 61 Broadway, 15th Floor, features big windows, many of which look out on the Hudson and New Jersey; an open layout for members to work and meet; and

a union hall that will host Delegate Assemblies, Labor Goes to the Movies, and other union events. And the cost is lower than staying in Midtown. It's close to many subway and bus stops, as well as the New Jersey PATH train. Tour the new space on Sept. 28 & 29 – details on page 12. **PAGES 2, 12**

IRAQ WAR

Fifth CUNY student killed

Hai Ming Hsia, 37, was a student at BMCC. He joined the Army to support his wife and son, now three years old. His parents spoke with *Clarion*. **PAGE 5**

UNFAIR PRACTICES

Online BA causes problems

CUNY's implementation of the new Online BA is trampling faculty rights, the union says. The PSC has filed a grievance and a charge with PERB. **PAGE 5**

CITY UNIONS

Coalition forms, DC 37 settles

In June, several unions announced the broadest bargaining coalition in a generation. Then DC 37 announced a new deal with no concessions. **PAGES 6 & 7**



RETIREMENT

Pension equity fight continues

Governor Pataki vetoed the PSC's pension equity bill after the Legislature passed it. But the union continued its lobbying effort, and may still win this Fall. **PAGE 3**



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR | WRITE TO: CLARION/PSC, 61 BROADWAY, 15TH FLOOR, NEW YORK, NY 10006. E-MAIL: PHOGNESS@PSCMAIL.ORG. FAX: 212-302-7815.

Kudos for conversion lines

● I would like to convey my appreciation to the PSC for incorporating into our new contract the first 100 full-time conversion lines restricted to long-serving adjuncts.

My interest in this matter began in 2002 while serving on the PSC Executive Council. In that year Bob Cermele and I jointly drew up a proposed plan to create a new class of adjuncts to be known as "Senior Adjuncts" who would be converted to full-time lecturer status as a reward for their long-term devoted and outstanding service to their respective departments at a unit of CUNY.

It's great to see this idea start to become a reality, for many reasons:

1) It will better serve our student body with additional full-time instructors.

2) It will reward our finest long-term adjuncts with the advantages of full-time employment at a single unit of CUNY.

3) It will lighten the burden of existing full-time faculty, as these former part-timers share in the committee work, curriculum development, advisement and other duties of the department.

I can hardly wait to congratulate the first crop of 100 "Senior Adjuncts!"

Lou Alpert

Bronx Community College

PSC President Barbara Bowen responds: *Thanks for the letter. It's important that full-time faculty are supportive of this advance for part-timers. Full-time faculty also benefit from this provision, because conversion lines bring in seasoned teachers to share the work of the department.*

Just for clarification: while there are several similarities between the proposal described above and the new contract's conversion lines, there are also significant differences. The new positions will be regular full-time lines, not a special category of adjunct, and they will be filled through a regular search process within the pool of CUNY's most experienced adjuncts.

Against tenure change

● I wish to register my serious objection to the lengthening of the time to tenure from five to seven years.

Tenure is a form of job security. When one is granted tenure the burden of proof is the problem of the administration, because one can only be removed from tenured employment at CUNY through a disciplinary procedure. A nontenured person has the burden of proof in a case of nonreappointment, which makes such cases harder to fight than disciplinary charges.

I would urge the PSC to pursue a reopening of the tenure questions subject to binding arbitration.

Israel Kugler

PSC Deputy President Emeritus

Backing Batson

● As progressive trade unionists, we're too often faced with the "lesser evil" choice in electoral politics. In the coming Democratic primary we have a terrific candidate in Bill Batson, running in the 57th Assembly District in Brooklyn (Prospect Heights & Fort Greene). While NY State United Teachers has endorsed Hakeem Jeffries, I urge PSC members to give Batson their consideration.

Batson has a long history of engagement on issues of concern to PSC members. While on Senator David Paterson's staff, Bill was a knowledgeable advocate for the union's legislative priorities. He has also worked for the NY Civil Liberties Union, and before that for 1199/SEIU. In all those roles he championed the cause of labor, grassroots communities and civil liberties. Most recently, as a member of Community Board 8 he has opposed Forest City, Ratner's mega-development project, calling for affordable housing over the demands of developers.

Bill also has a very personal connection to CUNY – he is a student at City College's Center for Worker Education, where he hopes to complete his degree soon. (Full disclosure: he was a student of mine a few years ago.) Bill is also an educator: he works with the American Civil Rights Education Service to organize and lead study trips to civil rights landmarks for area high school students.

A vote for Batson will be a vote for a progressive voice for the common good in Albany.

Stephen Leberstein
CCNY Center for Worker Education
(retired)

Editor's note: "Sometimes we are faced with the difficult but relatively good situation of choosing between two candidates who would both be our allies," comments Eileen Moran, co-chair of the PSC Legislative Committee. Moran reports that NYSUT endorsed Hakeem Jeffries in part because of his strong grasp of issues in educational legislation.

"I am running for the State Assembly so that I can fight for the issues that working men and women of the 57th District have expressed are important to them," says Jeffries. "I grew up in a union household and I know firsthand about the overwhelming values that unions bring to a family. Together we will work to bring awareness to the issues that are important to organized labor and the hardworking residents of the 57th Assembly District."

In addition to NYSUT, Jeffries has been endorsed by AFSCME DC 37, SEIU Local 32BJ, CWA District 1 and Local 1180, NYC Board of Education Employees Local 372, Mason Tenders District Council, UNITE-

HERE, SSEU Local 371, Carpenters' Local 926, Painters' District Council 9, NYS AFL-CIO, Working Families Party, Lambda Independent Democrats, and others.

Details on both candidates are available on their websites: www.hakeemjeffries.com and www.batsonforbrooklyn.com.

Earn credibility

● I write in response to the letter in the Summer *Clarion* by Michele Molina of QCC, in which she defends the indefensible David Horowitz. Mr. Horowitz has a point of view, as does Ms. Molina, and they both urge academia to be "open to all points of view." However, they both err in insinuating that, intellectually, all views are equally weighty. In fact, most scholars consider verifiable evidence in determining the value of a position and, further, encourage true scholarship as both analytical and skeptical. We learn, over time, that truth is often slanted by those with a true vested interest in a posi-

tion. Thus, those "in power" are, by that fact alone, subject to special scrutiny. Apologists for the current administration in Washington, for example, can cry all they want for equal time, but they must earn their credibility with facts and data.

Mr. Horowitz expresses an opinion. Virtually all of his "facts" have been discredited – and that matters. Some people argue that the Holocaust never happened, or that there are WMDs in Iraq. These, too, are opinions, but there is no room in scholarly journals or in the academic forum for such baseless musings.

Alan Hoffner
College of Staten Island

Solidarity: getting it right

A note from the editor: Due to a production error, the text of Tom Angotti's letter in the Summer Clarion was mangled. Below is the letter as it should have appeared.

● In the recent PSC elections, I was very wary of candidates who criti-

cized the union's leadership for showing solidarity with other public workers, particularly the city's transit workers, who were facing tough contract negotiations. New York City unions need to practice more solidarity, not less, especially at critical moments when it's most needed.

Some unions thought they would get a better deal by working alone. The record shows that they were wrong. They got worse contracts and also put other City unions in weaker positions.

It's good to hear that many unions in the Municipal Labor Committee are discussing some kind of coalition bargaining. Negotiating together is a good way to build solidarity. It will make it easier for members of all the unions to support each other when that support is needed most.

If a coalition emerges, PSC will benefit from sticking with the rest of the labor movement. We have helped other unions when they needed us, and CUNY management must take into account that other unions can return the favor. This is Labor Unions 101 – we're stronger when we stick together. In unity there's power.

Tom Angotti
Hunter College

Getting to the new PSC office



The new PSC office at 61 Broadway, 15th floor, is between Rector Street and Exchange Place. (See the star in the map above.) Whether you're coming for a committee meeting, the Delegate Assembly, Labor Goes to the Movies or to see a pension or grievance counselor, you'll find the new office convenient to most mass transit.

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Pension bill passed, vetoed

By **ROBERT CERMELE**
City Tech
and **PETER HOGNESS**

After five years of effort by the PSC, both houses of the New York State Legislature approved the union's pension equity bill at the end of June. In August, Governor Pataki vetoed the legislation, but PSC leaders say it could still be enacted later this Fall.

"Today we hear increasing demands for public worker pension give-backs," noted PSC First Vice President Steve London. "In this political environment, to get this pension reform passed was a major victory, and we are not going to give up now." Despite the veto, London said, the bill might yet become law either through a veto override or through a broader legislative compromise; the union is examining both options.

CONTRIBUTIONS

The bill provides for CUNY to take over employee pension contributions for participants in TIAA-CREF and CUNY's other Optional Retirement Programs (ORP) after they reach 10 years of service. These members would no longer have to make their current contributions of either 3% or 1.5% of their salaries. The change would be phased in over a three-year period.

"The effect would be an increase in take-home pay for the thousands

PSC to continue lobbying

of PSC members whose pensions are with TIAA-CREF," said PSC President Barbara Bowen. This reform was approved in 2000 for participants in the Teachers' Retirement System (TRS) and other public employee pension systems – but members of TIAA-CREF and similar plans were not included.

CUNY offers its instructional staff two very different types of pensions. In both cases, CUNY makes regular contributions toward an individual's pension. TRS is a defined benefit plan, in which one's pension is determined only by annual contractual salary and years of service. TIAA-CREF and the other ORP programs are defined payment plans, in which one's pension is determined by the amount of money accumulated from employer and employee contributions and growth. Until 2000, all instructional staff hired on the same date made equal contributions, regardless of which type of plan they were part of.

REFORM

The reform passed in 2000 eliminated the employee contribution for TRS members with 10 or more years of service. At that time the stock market was soaring, TRS pension funds were flush, and employee contributions could thus be

reduced without a major cost to government employers. But participants in ORP plans like TIAA-CREF did not get the same treatment: since these are defined contribution plans, to relieve participants of a 3% contribution would mean that their employer had to pay 3% more. To win equal treatment for those in TIAA-CREF and similar plans, comments London, was therefore "a much heavier political lift."

HEAVY LIFT

"The TRS pension reform deal was put in place just before the current PSC leadership came into office," said London, "and we made getting the 3% reduction for ORP participants a legislative priority. We had support for the change in 2001, but that was derailed by the fiscal impact of 9/11. But we kept at it." This year, after five years of effort, the union was successful.

The legislation approved by the Senate and Assembly, but vetoed by Pataki, provided for the elimination of the contributions by ORP members with 10 years of service in three equal steps. That is, in each of the next three years, their contributions would go down by 1% or 1.5% (depending on whether they currently contribute 3% or 1.5%). Once it is fully phased in, ORP members with 10 or more

years of service would see an increase in take-home pay equal to their previous contribution rate.

"Getting this pension equity legislation passed by both the Assembly and State Senate speaks to the influence and respect our union has won in both houses of the State Legislature," commented Miriam Thompson, a member of the union's Legislative Committee. Bowen thanked members of the PSC and UUP, the SUNY union, who went to Albany to lobby for the change, as well as NYSUT legislative staff. She also thanked the CUNY chancellor's office: "CUNY's support for the bill after a meeting with PSC leadership in June was a key factor in its passage," Bowen said.

FIGHT CONTINUES

"Pataki's veto was cynical and self-serving," said Marianne Pita, PSC chapter chair at Bronx Community College. "Equal treatment should have been part of this pension reform in the first place, and the change is long overdue."

"The veto is part of a negotiating strategy on Pataki's part," observed London. "There are certain things he wants from the legislature, and he wants to have something to trade." The union has a strategy for this endgame, he said, and hopes to see the bill enacted before the end of the year. "Either way," he said, "we will keep fighting until we make it happen."

Adjunct unemployment

The PSC-supported bill on adjunct unemployment insurance did not pass out of committee this session, though this year it moved further along than ever before. It remains one of the union's top legislative priorities.

CUNY management has vociferously opposed the bill, which would give contingent faculty the same rights as other temporary workers – unemployment insurance during the summer if adjunct faculty are not assigned a class, or during Fall or Spring semesters when an adjunct's class is cancelled or she isn't teaching. An exception in New York law for educational employees means that adjunct faculty are denied the same rights as workers in agricultural or other seasonal industries.

PSC Vice President for Part-Time Personnel Marcia Newfield pointed out that adjuncts in Washington, California, New Jersey and Connecticut all receive unemployment insurance. She called CUNY's arguments against equal treatment "a lot of double-talk."

PSC president Barbara Bowen agreed. "CUNY wants to have it both ways," Bowen said. "They claim adjuncts are not permanent, so they are not entitled to seniority and other protections. Then they say adjuncts have continuing employment, so they shouldn't have unemployment insurance. This is a basic right, enjoyed by millions of other temporary employees. The PSC has not finished fighting for it."

—DR

City Council restores most of mayor's cuts

By **PETER HOGNESS**
and **ELLEN BALLEISEN**
Bronx Community College

The New York City Council rejected almost all of Mayor Bloomberg's proposed cuts to City funding for CUNY when it adopted a final budget on June 30.

While a few cuts were not restored, the final budget did include \$16 million in increases over last year's appropriations for the new collective bargaining agreement, and an additional \$6.7 million for mandatory cost increases like energy, leases and pensions. "In five out of the last six years, we have been successful in making real progress in City budgets for CUNY," said Steve London, the PSC's first vice president.

RESTORATIONS

The Council restored \$15 million in proposed cuts to CUNY operating expenses; full funding for the Peter Vallone Scholarships and the "Safety Net" financial aid program; plus funds for a variety of Council-funded initiatives, from the Domini-

Financial aid programs saved

can Studies Institute to the Center for Worker Education.

"The City Council determined that Bloomberg's proposed cuts were not consistent with the goal of rebuilding CUNY," said PSC Treasurer Mike Fabricant. But while the PSC helped convince the Council to turn back the reductions and meet new costs, Fabricant said, it was not able to win Council funding for new initiatives proposed by CUNY and the PSC.

The PSC supported a request by CUNY administration for \$20 million in funding for new programs, and the union also advanced its own proposal for \$8 million to support 100 new full-time faculty lines. Hiring of these new professors, dubbed "City Council Scholars," would include a focus on adding more faculty counselors and increasing racial and ethnic diversity.

When the Council decided not to back either request, the PSC

said it would raise its proposal again next year. "It takes some time for Councilmembers to wrap their heads around new initiatives," commented Fabricant. "That's what the lobbying process is all about – educating people about the need. We'll continue to press on this, and eventually we'll be successful."

Charles Barron, chair of the City Council's Higher Education Committee, told *Clarion* that in addition to getting almost all of the

Mayor's proposed cuts off the table, the Council secured \$600,000 in new funding for a CUNY-based immigration assistance project, and \$400,000 in new scholarships for students in math, science and allied health fields. Barron noted that only \$1.5 million in funding was restored for CUNY's Black Male Initiative, which had originally been slated for \$2 million in funding but was targeted for elimination by the Mayor.

Union lobbying makes a difference.



City Councilmember Charles Barron says the State is underfunding CUNY.

Clarion asked Barron, who will leave the Council after this year, what he saw as CUNY's most pressing issue. "The primary challenge is at the State level," he said. "I'm really concerned about the decreasing reliance on State funding and the increasing reliance on tuition." He argued that New York State has been abdicating its re-

sponsibility to higher education, and said it's time to consider reinstating free tuition.

This year's State budget for CUNY was the best in years, and PSC lobbying helped win the first major funding increases in a generation. But even these gains still leave State support 25% lower than in 1990 in real terms.

BCC chapter tackles asbestos

By DANIA RAJENDRA

Sitting at his desk in his office one Friday last Spring, Assistant Professor of Mathematics Peter Yom noticed that the ceiling tile above his head was loose.

"I poked the tile a little bit to see how loose it was, and as soon as I moved it, I saw the rat," Yom said. "It was looking down at me." And it didn't run away.

The rat stayed put, Yom told *Clarion*, because it was dead. "It was pretty much mummified," he said. Yom immediately called the buildings and grounds department for Bronx Community College – called Physical Plant Services, or PPS – to remove it and fix his tile.

FLOOR TO CEILING

When PPS hadn't come by Tuesday of the following week, Yom emailed Vice President of Administration Mary Coleman. She wrote to PPS staff and Yom, and from the exchange that followed Yom learned that his ceiling had bigger problems than the rat that was still peering over his shoulder from up above.

Organizing for health & safety

The ceiling tiles contained asbestos. The same was true for the tiles on the floor, and PPS alerted Martin Pulver, the college's environmental health and safety officer. Yom closed his office and met students in his department's main office instead. The BCC PSC chapter organized a meeting for the Math Department, to keep its members informed, and invited Pulver to speak.

SAFE?

Pulver told the meeting that he had examined the tiles and considered them safe. They were so safe, he said, that he'd let his own grandkids play on them. Afterward, he arranged for someone from PPS to glue down the tiles.

But the PPS worker, a DC 37 member assigned to the job without protective gear, was stopped by PSC Chapter Chair Marianne Pita, who was concerned about the possibility of asbestos in the air.

The chapter insisted that the college test the space for asbestos, a nat-

urally occurring fiber used for years to make fire-resistant construction materials. But when asbestos fibers are inhaled, they can lodge in the lungs, causing breathing difficulties and cancer. Asbestos has therefore been banned from new buildings since 1978.

Most patients with asbestosis worked with the material at high exposures for long periods of time. New York State law requires that asbestos levels in public buildings remain below 0.01 fibers per cubic centimeter of air, and levels higher than that can require abatement by certified asbestos removers.

The college hired Testwell Laboratories to carry out the testing, and the results stirred PSC concern: the company found that asbestos was present at just below the legal limit.

Pita shared the lab results with PSC Health and Safety Committee Co-Chair Dave Kotelchuck, who noted that the testing had been done on "a quiet Saturday" – not during a

busier weekday, when faculty, staff and students were tromping on the tiles. More activity could loosen more fibers, he said, and might push the level of asbestos just past the legal limit.

Kotelchuck endorsed the idea of removing the tiles, and urged that the work be done on weekends or other times when the building was largely empty. Pulver agreed to have the tiles removed during spring break, when students and faculty would not be in the office.

"There is no known safe level of exposure to asbestos dust," Kotelchuck told *Clarion*. "That is, there is no threshold level below which exposure is safe. So we must treat asbestos dust as hazardous at all levels of exposure, and avoid all unnecessary exposure, even at low levels."

HAZARDOUS

Because AFSCME DC37 represents PPS workers, Pita and other members have reached out to the union to discuss repair of asbestos tiles. The problem is bound to recur, as Pulver

notes that there are asbestos tiles all over the campus and all over CUNY.

"We have had situations where the floor has really disintegrated, where the tiles were cracked and crushed, in tiny little pieces," Pulver said. "In a situation like that, I would immediately take care of it." In this case, Pulver said that while he did not necessarily share the union's view of the situation, he agreed to remove the tiles to address employee concerns.

EXPERTISE

For the campus PSC chapter, Pita said, the central union's expertise was invaluable, and made the local organizing possible. "Our chapter worked successfully with the administration to clean up the problem," she said. "Asbestos is a joint concern, and we'll keep meeting during the Fall semester to stay on top of the issue."

The collaborative approach seems to have led to a good outcome for everyone – Yom is back in his renovated office, the chapter is organizing around the issue, and Martin Pulver says, "Now that [Yom] is comfortable in his new office, everyone is happy – including me."

The one exception might be the rat, who could not be reached for comment.

PSC leadership starts 'listening campaign'

By PETER HOGNESS

The PSC Executive Council has started an ambitious "listening campaign" – a systematic effort to talk with the union's committees, local leaders and rank-and-file members about their concerns.

"We've often gone out to the campuses to meet with members," said PSC President Barbara Bowen. "But usually it's been when we're asking people to do something." This time they're going out with an open agenda – and open ears.

"We need as many voices at the table as possible," said newly elected PSC Secretary Arthurine DeSola. In addition to hearing from local leaders and active union members, she adds, there will be an effort to reach those who are less involved. "There's always a section of people who don't go to meetings, or are less likely to speak out," DeSola explained. "So if you want to hear what they think, you have to go out and ask them."

BROAD INPUT

Bowen said she proposed the campaign because broad input is needed for the union to make the best decisions – and this Fall, the PSC will focus on strategic planning to set the union's priorities for the next three years. "On strategy, the Delegate Assembly will make the final decisions," Bowen said. "But to inform those decisions, we need to hear from rank-and-file members, from local leadership and from the hundreds of mem-

Visiting every campus

bers of union committees."

Bowen noted that the PSC has just been through a hotly contested election. "Now it's important for the union to move forward together," she said. "We can do that only if we listen to each other."

This Fall, Bowen said, one or two of the union's four principal officers, together with another member of the Executive Council (EC), will go out to each CUNY campus. They'll meet with chapter leadership, and walk through each college to talk with rank-and-file members.

In fact, this listening campaign has already begun. In August, Bowen and the PSC's new Treasurer, Mike Fabricant, organized a series of meetings with the union's various committees. August also saw DeSola begin her own series of campus visits, starting with Medgar Evers College.

DeSola – a higher education assistant who is the first HEO or CLT to become one of the PSC's four principal officers – plans to go to every CUNY campus, and will focus on speaking with members of CUNY's professional staff. "I won't be able to speak with every professional staff member," she told *Clarion*. "But by talking with as many as possible, I'll get a good cross-section. To me, it's an exciting campaign, and I'm looking forward to it."

The August discussions with union committees often dealt with the relationship between that com-

mittee's work and the union's goals overall. "If we can develop very well-defined and accepted strategic objectives," said Jim Perlstein, co-chair of the Solidarity Committee, "it would be easier to choose from among different projects."

Perlstein met with Bowen, Fabricant, and members of the PSC's Solidarity and International Committees on August 16. "It was a great discussion," he told *Clarion*. "There's going to be a lot more back-and-forth this Fall – and that's what we need."



Members of the Solidarity and International Committees meet with leadership.

RF Central ratifies contract

By CLARION STAFF

On June 26 and 27, PSC members at the RF Central Office voted in an on-site election and ratified a new collective bargaining agreement, with 87% of those who cast ballots voting "yes." In February members had voted down a previous deal, and the two sides resumed negotiations in the Spring.

The new contract provides raises of 3.75% in each of the first and second years and 3.5% in the third year, for a total increase of 11.4% after compounding. The agreement also includes higher amounts for longevity. The contract runs from October 2005 through December 2008.

Negotiating team members who watched the count were happy about the result. "I feel a sense of relief," said Jim Smith. "We went through a lot of pushing to get this thing. I just want to thank all the members for voting."

GOOD TURNOUT

"I'm glad we got such a good turnout," said another team member, Darryl Thorpe, who noted that 71 of the 83 PSC members in the unit had taken part. Chapter chair Anthony Dixon noted that "having the contract vote in-house made a big difference." The final tally was 62 yes, eight no, and one blank ballot. There was one challenged ballot, which remained unopened.

Like the proposed contract voted down in February, the new agreement increases members' share of premium costs for health insurance coverage, but benefits will remain the same. The raises add up to about a half-percent more than in the previously proposed deal.

Several members commented on the difficulty of the negotiations, speculating that they might face a tougher fight in the next round. "It's like shades of the '90s," said Dawn Sievers, a 20-plus-year veteran at the RF. "In 1997, negotiations dragged on for two years, and there was a lot of animosity. We've noticed that the RF has stepped up their game, and we need to step up ours in order to win improvements."

BMCC student killed in Iraq

By PETER HOGNESS

For much of the New York media, the death of a soldier from New York City is now considered routine – it no longer qualifies as news.

Hai Ming Hsia, who was a student at BMCC, died in combat in Iraq on August 1. The only mention in *The New York Times* was the inclusion of Hsia's name in an ongoing list, "Names of the Dead." The *New York Post* and *New York Sun*, two of the biggest cheerleaders for the war, did not mention Hsia at all.

CHINATOWN NATIVE

Hsia lived his whole life in Chinatown, and it is there that he is mourned. Inside Vanella's Funeral Chapel on Madison Street on August 10, nothing is routine. Hsia's three-year-old son Brandon, restless, is running back and forth in the hall. Hsia's wife, Yanisse Oliveras, can't look at the open casket any more and walks outside, leaning on the shoulder of a friend. Two soldiers stand motionless beside the coffin, a military honor guard.

Nelida Hsia, Hai Ming's mother, steps out to speak to a reporter. "This is Bush's fault," she says, in a voice that is quiet and fierce. "He took my son, my only son." She takes the elbow of her husband,

Hai Ming Hsia mourned by his parents



Hai Ming Hsia's parents, Nelida and Ting Fang Hsia.

Ting Fang Hsia, and steers him toward a couch so they can sit.

Nelida Hsia switches to Spanish to vent her rage. "Why did they have to send him? His life ended there! They sent him once, then they sent him back again... And now I have no son." She breaks off and sobs for a while, leaning toward

her husband but not on him, with a tight grip on his hand. "So many innocents are dying," she says after she recovers. "But Bush doesn't care. It's the same as if he killed my son himself."

Hai Ming's mother says her son was almost done with his Army service. He had finished a tour of

duty in Iraq and was making plans to return to civilian life. "He wanted to go back to college and finish," she says. But then he was ordered to remain in the military for an additional year. "They call it a 'stop-loss order,'" says Hai Ming's cousin, Alelie Serrano. He was shipped back to Kuwait, and from there sent to Iraq about a month before he died.

Other soldiers in his unit described Hai Ming was both mature and innocent, devoted to his family, and an excellent shot. "There was not one person who didn't like the guy," Sgt. James Moneyppenny told the military newspaper *Stars & Stripes*. "When we found out, I thought, 'Of all the people... the nicest guy in the platoon.'"

INTEREST IN HISTORY

Serrano says Hai Ming was a student at BMCC in late 2001 and 2002, before he enlisted in the Army. "He was very into history," she says, and studied sociology and psychology while he was in school. He decided to go into the Army when his son's birth was drawing near, because he felt the money he earned as a retail-

store security guard was not enough to support a family.

After the Army, "he wanted to go back to college and finish what he had started," Serrano says. He told her he wanted to enroll as soon as he got out. His goal was better employment. "He said, 'I want to make sure that I get something stable,'" she recalls.

NO CHANCE

"Now, no chance to work," Ting Fang Hsia says about his son, shaking his head. "He was my baby,"

Fifth CUNY student to die in war

says Ting Fang, as he places his right fist over his heart. "He was man, but my baby." Ting Fang is 78 years old, originally from Taiwan. He speaks little English, some Spanish, mostly Chinese. His wife Nelida, originally from Puerto Rico, is 66. Their son was 37 when he died.

Before Hai Ming's redeployment, Serrano says, he spent some time back home on leave. "He had a friend who tried to convince him to go to Canada," she recalls. But Hai Ming decided against that path, and reported back to his unit.

Hai Ming Hsia was with an infantry regiment in the 1st Armored Division when he was killed in Ramadi by a roadside bomb.

New Online BA sparks grievance

By STEVE LONDON
PSC First Vice President

It is hard to miss the advertisements for the new CUNY Online BA degree in Communications and Culture offered by the School of Professional Studies (SPS). Some 17 courses are being offered during the Fall semester and from all the hype things would appear to be running smoothly. SPS, however, has been surrounded by controversy since its founding. University Faculty Senate representatives have questioned the academic integrity of a program developed outside the academic department structure (see the January 2006 *Clarion*, page 4, at www.psc-cuny.org/communications.htm).

New issues with CUNY's employment practices at SPS arose over the summer, and the PSC filed both a grievance against CUNY for violations of the contract and an improper practice charge with the Public Employment Relations Board for violation of the Taylor Law.

INDIVIDUAL CONTRACTS

CUNY asked some, but not all, of the faculty teaching in the Online BA program to sign an individual contract, called the "Online Course Development Agreement," that

Intellectual property at issue

would require them to assign to the University the copyright on the course that they developed. The "course," in this agreement, means "all the deliverables necessary for teaching the online course... such as syllabi, handouts, reading lists, individual and group exercises, and instructor guides."

ONE-TIME CASH

In signing the agreement, faculty have to stipulate that they "intend" their "services" to be "outside the scope of the Author's employment by the University," and the "course" to be "commissioned work." In exchange for a one-time payment of \$3,000 or \$5,000, faculty who sign this individual contract would give up ownership and ultimate control of the "course" they created, including the right to teach the course. The contract does provide for future compensation for course revisions or advice to other faculty, but the University would own the course.

Faculty members who teach these courses are understandably happy to receive additional compensation for course development work. Also, faculty who have an in-

terest in teaching online courses appreciate both the opportunity provided by the new Online BA program and the resources CUNY is devoting to an area of intellectual interest to them. So what could be wrong with this picture?

First, the agreement that CUNY wants faculty to sign is based on a fiction: the idea that authorship of scholarly and pedagogical works – in this case, course development – is outside the scope of faculty employment.

CUNY's intellectual property (IP) policy guarantees faculty ownership of copyright on scholarly and pedagogical works, with two exceptions. One of those exceptions is for "commissioned work," which is defined as work outside the scope of employment. But CUNY faculty prepare course materials all the time, as part of teaching a course. If CUNY is allowed to claim that "commissioned work" can include activity integral to teaching a course, it would create a huge loophole in the University's IP policy and the contract. CUNY could then pay an arbitrary amount of money for course devel-

opment, take over copyright ownership, and no contractual protections would be available to faculty who created these courses.

Second, current CUNY policy allows for a greater rate of pay for course development than was offered to faculty in this "Online Course Development Agreement." Under the provisions of CUNY's multiple position policy, faculty are eligible to be paid up to one-ninth of their annual salary for each month of work during the annual leave period. The \$3,000 CUNY has offered for online course development is much less

CUNY violates contract, says PSC

than faculty should receive for the hours of work that they put in. Also, current policy allows for such payments without having to give up control of the course or the copyright.

Third, CUNY's individual dealing with faculty members doing bargaining unit work is unlawful and undermines the union. If CUNY wants to negotiate additional compensation for bargaining unit work, the PSC stands ready to engage in those negotiations. But, it is not permissible for CUNY to try to pick off a few faculty and strike a deal with them which will set precedents that may under-

mine the terms and conditions for the rest of the bargaining unit. In circumstances like this one, the individual negotiations almost always result in bad deals.

INCONSISTENCY

Fourth, there appears to be no consistency in the offering of these individual contracts. Not everyone was offered a contract or extra compensation. The terms offered to those teaching in the same program and doing the same work appear to be different. The lack of due process protections in these individual contracts would leave faculty subject to favoritism.

The PSC has made an information request of CUNY to provide the all of the individual contracts it has signed for the Online BA program. To date, CUNY has failed to comply with this lawful request. A Step Two grievance was argued on August 21, and a PERB hearing will be scheduled soon. The remedy sought by the PSC is an end to direct dealing with individual members of the bargaining unit by CUNY, restoration to faculty members of the copyright on each course developed, and proper compensation for the course development work undertaken by faculty.

Unions stand together

Municipal bargaining coalition f

By PETER HOGNESS
& ESTHER KAPLAN

On June 23, the PSC joined unions representing teachers, sanitation workers, nurses, bridge operators and more than a dozen other unions in a historic municipal labor coalition. Its goal is joint bargaining over City workers' wages and other issues in order to turn around years of givebacks and raises that lag behind inflation.

"This is the most significant coalition to emerge in decades," said United Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten, one of five co-chairs of the new alliance. "With working people losing their pensions and health care, and the erosion of the middle class, many of us realize that the issues that bind us are far greater than the ones that divide us."

The move was welcomed by unions, including the PSC, that have long argued for a coalition approach. "Our real strength is in our membership," PSC President Barbara Bowen told *Clarion*. "And with 175,000 members, this coalition can take stronger action as a group than any one union could separately."

Coalition bargaining became the norm during and just after the fiscal crisis of the 1970s. Since then City unions have continued a coalition approach on health benefits through the Municipal Labor Committee. But on wages and other issues, there has been a general shift to "pattern bargaining," in which the city seeks to cut a deal with one union and then impose that pattern on the rest.

DO MORE TOGETHER

"That policy has been carried out with more or less nastiness by Dinkins, Giuliani, and Bloomberg," said Stanley Aronowitz, distinguished professor at the CUNY Graduate Center and a member of the PSC Executive Council. For the last few rounds of negotiations, that pattern was set by AFSCME District Council 37, whose contracts included an infamous "double-zero" settlement in the 1990s – two years with no raises.

More than anything, it was the Bloomberg administration's insistence on "productivity" concessions in the last round of contract talks that made many unions decide a new approach was required. While the city used past "patterns" to hold down the level of wage increases, Bloomberg took this one step further: his administration refused to grant any raises unless unions helped pay for them with givebacks, such as longer hours or lower pay for new hires.

In effect, unions were told to take money out of one pocket in order to put it into the other. A union like the

PSC, which refused even to consider cuts in starting pay, faced particular difficulty in reaching a settlement.

The city's hard-line stance made the last round of municipal bargaining lengthy and bitter, with negotiations often dragging on for years after contracts had expired. As this round came to a close, unions began looking for a way to break out of this box in the future. In April, the UT announced it would no longer trade longer working hours for higher wages, an exchange that had been a key part of its last two contracts.

DIFFERENT STRATEGY

By this summer a large number of City unions had had enough, and banded together to form the coalition. "The driving force for us is the length we had to go last time around to get a contract," says coalition co-chair Harry Nespoli, president of Uniformed Sanitationmen's Association Local 831. "Three and a half years without a contract is much too long. Our members eat every single day, pay their bills every single month. Why not try a different strategy this time?"

The PSC Executive Council (EC) voted unanimously to join the coalition, and President Bowen worked hard to help bring unions together in the new formation. Union delegates expressed strong support for the move in a June 22 discussion, citing the new organizing possibilities that a coalition could offer.

For the PSC, bargaining can be complex since it involves not only the city but also CUNY and the state. But given the key role that City bargaining policy has played in past PSC negotiations, delegates and EC members felt that the PSC needs to work closely with other unions to produce the strongest possible City settlement.

When the new alliance was announced, the city's labor commissioner, James Hanley, reacted dismissively, saying the member unions were too diverse, and he declined to say whether he would even talk with the group. But Nespoli told *Clarion* that the city's stand had softened since, and Hanley met a small group of coalition leaders, including Bowen, on August 14.

Another challenge is that while the coalition represents about half the city's workforce, it lacks some major players. DC 37 and the police and firefighters' unions – with the exception of the Uniformed Fire Alarm Dispatchers – decided not to join.

But it is still the largest and broadest coalition in more than a generation, and the presence of this united front could have a broader effect. Just as the existence of unions helps push up wages for nonunion



UT President Randi Weingarten and representatives of a wide range of City unions announced the formation of a new bargaining coalition on June 23.

workers, formation of the coalition may also help the unions that remain outside of it.

ROLE IN DC 37 DEAL?

"I had to look at my universe, at the police and fire unions and what they are doing, so I decided to stay back," explained Peter Gorman, head of the fire officers union, which chose not to join. "But the formation of the coalition is good for us...I think it actually puts me in a better position."

Less than a month after the coalition formed, DC 37 won its best wage package in years – with no concessions (see sidebar).

"I think the formation of the coalition was the impetus for the mayor to settle with DC 37," said Lynn Taylor, a member of DC 37's bargaining committee, "and it might have been the line in the sand that made them drop the demand for 'productivity' concessions." *The New York Times* reported that the coalition had spurred the city to bring talks with DC 37 to a swift conclusion, and Weingarten told *The Chief* that it "played a role in the background by enhancing DC 37's leverage."

Dennis Sullivan, DC 37's chief negotiator, strongly disagreed. "It played no role," he insisted. "Anyone who wants to delude themselves can, but Randi Weingarten has no business claiming credit for this contract." DC 37 won a better contract than last time, Sullivan

said, mainly because "the city is in much better fiscal health," with a \$5 billion surplus.

But Ed Watt, secretary-treasurer of Transit Workers Local 100, which does not bargain with the City, said that the City coalition and last December's transit strike had both changed the bargaining climate. Ed Watt noted that the strike led many unions to agitate for reform of New York's Taylor Law, which bans strikes by all public employees. "We told Republicans in Albany that the model of letting people wait three to four years for a contract is not acceptable, and they didn't have a response to that," he said. "Now [Bloomberg] wants to say there's no more need for Taylor Law reform, because he's settling more contracts."

More generally, said Watt, the city was disturbed by other unions' public support for the TWU when Local 100 President Roger Toussaint was jailed. "There were some sparks left around after the strike," he said, "and they have to make sure they don't catch fire."

SHOWING SPINE

The coalition, the strike and the surplus are each playing a role, according to Joshua Freeman, professor of history at Queens and the Graduate Center. "The labor movement has started to show some spine," Freeman said. "The fighting ability and instinct of the municipal labor movement had really atro-

phied," he noted. "But the TWU strike showed that you could take a job action and live to fight another day."

The subsequent formation of the coalition was "a sign that labor seems prepared to be more aggressive in its bargaining stance, and not be so passive as it has been in recent years," he continued. With a \$5 billion surplus, "the city could easily afford the modest increases it gave to DC 37. So, faced with the combination of a feistier labor movement and huge surpluses, Bloomberg decided to change course."

WHAT'S AHEAD

The coalition now has three co-chairs – Weingarten, Nespoli, and Carl Haynes, president of Teamsters Local 237 – with plans to add two more as its affiliates grow. Any contract deal will require agreement of three of the five chairs plus two-thirds of all the member unions. The coalition met in August to discuss its demands, and Nespoli said it wants to start bargaining without delay.

"The ultimate goal is to improve the terms of what's before us right now," says Nespoli, referring to the DC 37 deal. "There's such a huge budget surplus now, and if it's that huge, let's see how you're going to pay your municipal workers."

Bowen emphasized that good contracts for City workers are in every New Yorker's interest. "We make the city work," she said, "and

orms

DC 37 and City in new accord

On July 12, negotiators for New York City and AFSCME District Council 37, the largest municipal workers' union, reached agreement on a new contract, with raises of 9.42% over 32 months.

The deal marked an end to the Bloomberg's administration's hard line that workers must pay for their own raises through "productivity" concessions.

The settlement, which runs from July 1, 2005 to March 2, 2008, provides a 3.15% wage increase on day one, a 2% increase August 1, 2006, and a 4% increase on February 1, 2007. The city agreed to a \$100-per-member hike in its annual contributions to DC 37's Welfare Fund plus a one-time cash payment, for a total of \$40 million in additional City funding to the benefits fund. "The money will go a long way toward stabilizing our prescription drug benefit, which...has been squeezed by double-digit price increases," said DC 37 Executive Director Lillian Roberts in a message to members.

The contract also eases the city's residency requirement. Like police officers and firefighters, DC 37 members would be able to live on Long Island or the four counties just north of NYC, though they will still have to pay New York City income tax.

MORE FOR MEMBERS

It was a stark contrast with DC 37's contract settlement in 2004, which cut new employees' pay by 15% in exchange for much smaller raises. Under the banner of "pattern bargaining," Mayor Bloomberg then imposed the same general approach – giving raises only in exchange for concessions – on other City unions.

For the new agreement, Roberts said, "I listened hard to what the members wanted and we have de-

Bloomberg drops insistence on "self-funded" increases

livered...This is a great deal!" The settlement came after an 11-hour bargaining session, which Roberts said left her "physically drained but emotionally exhilarated."

LESS THAN INFLATION

DC 37's bargaining committee approved the agreement by a vote of 23 to 18. "It doesn't keep up with inflation at a time when the city is flush," said one of those who voted "no," Lynn Taylor, president of the DC 37 local at the NY Public Library. "If we can't do better than inflation now, with this surplus, when's it going to happen?" She also faulted the deal for not undoing the last contract's concessions.

But Taylor gave the accord credit for getting raises without further givebacks, plus much-needed money for DC 37's Welfare Fund, and predicted that members would vote to ratify. In a meeting on July 25, DC 37 a large majority of union delegates recommended approval.

Why did the city drop its demand that workers help pay for their own raises? Many observers said DC 37 was helped by formation of a new coalition of municipal unions (see article, left). Another factor may have been the city's request for arbitration in talks with the Police Benevolent Association, where the union is seeking raises above 5% a year; the city can now urge any arbitrator to follow the smaller increase in the DC 37 deal.

In addition, Bloomberg's success

at winning concessions was starting to cause its own problems. The last police contract included such deep cuts in the wages for new hires that in July the Police Department fell 13% short of its recruitment goals. The city has had trouble filling other positions, such as librarians.

Asked why he had approved a no-concessions contract, Bloomberg answered, "It gets more difficult to deliver services and do so with cost savings." Or, as Taylor put it, "You can't get blood from a stone."

Reaction to the settlement among local labor leaders was generally positive. "No one can complain that DC 37 has tied their hands," said Peter Gorman, head of the Uniformed Fire Officers Association. "And certainly people did say that in the last round."

But some voiced concern about two storm clouds on the horizon: City demands for concessions on pension and health care costs. Both points were pressed in talks with DC 37, but the city essentially took them off the table to achieve a settlement. DC 37 has agreed to revisit pensions in a labor-management committee, and the city will take up its health care proposals with the Municipal Labor Committee – an umbrella group of all City unions.

"You can't really see the value of this contract until those issues have been resolved," Taylor said.

– PH & EK



trying to provide City services 'on the cheap' shortchanges everyone. Underpaying teachers, for example, undermines public education." Communications Workers Local 1180 President Arthur Cheliotis said that City workers must hold the line for all working people in defending the right to health care and pensions, an argument that convinced much of the public to support the transit workers last winter.

MOBILIZATION

A mobilization committee, proposed by the PSC and chaired by Cheliotis, is charged with developing a strategy for involving members in turning up pressure on the city. "We need to get the members involved, in large and small ways," Cheliotis said. "Certainly public demonstrations are within the scope of what coalition partners are prepared to do."

In the wake of the DC 37 deal, four small unions left the coalition to sign "me-too" accords, including the 1,200-member Auto Mechanics union. But others are knocking on the door to join – the 6,000-member principals' union has indicated interest in joining once its current negotiations wind up.

In his State of the City speech last January, the mayor announced that he would seek significant new concessions in pensions and health care. While those issues were tabled in the DC 37 talks (see sidebar), the city could press hard on either front.

"The formation of the coalition has already changed the climate

for collective bargaining in New York City," said Bowen. "But the real test will be how the coalition uses the political leverage of 175,000 City workers."

Peter Hogness is editor of Clarion. Esther Kaplan is editor of Communiqué, newspaper of Communications Workers Local 1180.



The new bargaining coalition may make union solidarity more organized than past ad-hoc efforts, like the above December 2002 march supporting transit workers.

LABOR IN BRIEF

Union rights curtailed

The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) will decide three separate cases, collectively known as "Kentucky River," that may threaten the union rights of more than 8 million workers, especially professionals.

Federal labor law bars supervisors from organizing. In 2001, the Supreme Court found the NLRB's definition of "supervisor" – someone who hires, fires or disciplines others – is "inconsistent" with the law. Now, the NLRB is considering expanding the definition of supervisor to any worker who "directs" other employees while using "independent judgment."

The Economic Policy Institute, a worker-friendly think tank, estimates that 11.7% of post-secondary teachers would be directly affected by the pending cases. A decision was expected this summer, but none was announced as of press time.

Pataki nixes Taylor Law fix

In August, Governor George Pataki vetoed an AFL-CIO-backed bill to reform the Taylor Law and strengthen union power. When the Public Employment Relations Board (PERB), the independent agency that manages Taylor Law disputes, found that an employer was not bargaining in good faith, one change would have required that workers receive a 1% pay increase over one year, plus an additional 0.5% every three months until the employer met PERB's criteria. The penalty for job actions would have been reduced from two days' pay per day on strike to one, and unions would not forfeit checkoff of members' dues.

In June, the bill passed in both the Republican-controlled Senate and the Democrat-controlled Assembly by wide margins, but currently there are no signs that the Legislature will attempt to overturn Pataki's veto.

NJ child care workers win union rights

More than 7,000 home child care workers in New Jersey won the right to organize in August. Governor Jon Corzine signed an executive order recognizing the Child Care Workers Union, a joint project of the Communication Workers of America (CWA) and American Federal, State and County Municipal Employees (AFSCME).

Currently, child care providers earn about \$99 to \$105 per week per child, or "unbelievably low wages," as CWA Local 1037 President Hetty Rosenstein called them. "Some are making the equivalent of less than \$5 an hour, with zero benefits," she noted. Child care workers are paid by New Jersey but are not state employees. The governor's order does not change their status, but does allow them to organize.

PSC at AFT meet in Boston

By DANIA RAJENDRA

The PSC saw many of its priorities take center stage at the 2006 convention of the American Federation of Teachers. Fifty PSC members were among the more than 3,000 AFT delegates who met from July 20-23 in Boston, to make policy decisions for the 1.3 million-member union.

Higher education issues have become increasingly prominent in the work of the AFT. This year the union has been very active in countering attacks on academic freedom, such as the so-called "Academic Bill of Rights," and the 2006 convention approved a major initiative to tackle the staffing crisis in US colleges and universities.

Delegates re-elected PSC President Barbara Bowen as one of 39 AFT vice presidents. This is Bowen's third term in the post, where she has helped shape AFT policy. "Having Barbara on the AFT Executive Council has meant a stronger voice for the PSC, and national leadership on higher education issues," commented First Vice President Steve London.

HIGHER PRIORITY

Within the AFT's higher education policy committee, Bowen headed a task force to develop a plan of action on the academic staffing crisis. That crisis is seen in a shrinking pool of full-time, tenured positions; the heavy reliance on exploited part-time faculty who have no job security; declining public funding and fewer resources for students.

In response, AFT delegates voted to take on a national campaign to draw public attention to these problems and press for state and federal solutions. Legislation will be introduced simultaneously in about 20 states this January, and hearings on these

Proposing legislation in 20 states at the same time.

bills will raise public awareness of the staffing crisis – which, as an AFT statement noted, is "underreported and poorly acknowledged."

Such legislation might mandate minimum proportions of tenure-track positions, both in departments and college-wide. It could provide academic freedom protections and due process guarantees for adjuncts; fund improved salaries and benefits; and require that contingent faculty have paid time for student office hours and for research. States could require that adjuncts' salaries and benefits be proportionate to those of full-timers.

HIGHER ED CRISIS

"No one piece of legislation will restore the life of our colleges and universities – but we must start the conversation about how [the staffing crisis] hurts students and limits research," Bowen told delegates when she introduced the initiative in a meeting of the AFT's

Convention tackles higher ed issues

higher education division. "We can begin to form a movement, because we're going to need a movement to tackle this crisis."

Delegates were enthusiastic about not just reacting to these mounting problems, but taking the initiative to fight for a solution. Bowen noted that right-wing attacks on academia, such as the campaign for a so-called "Academic Bill of Rights" (ABOR), have aimed to define the terms of public debate on higher education. But, she said, if the far right "can introduce legislation and change the conversation in higher education, so can we."

ACADEMIC FREEDOM

AFT delegates affirmed their opposition to ABOR, which would put government in the business of monitoring faculty members' political views, and voted to continue the union's participation in the Free Exchange on Campus coalition, which supports faculty rights and open discussion on campus.

So far ABOR has not passed in any of the dozens of states where it has been introduced, to a large extent because of the AFT's active opposition.

Delegates also criticized the narrow agenda of the Bush administration's commission on higher education, which has issued several preliminary statements in advance of its final report. "The major thrust is that we must be preparing to institute more [standardized] testing," PSC delegate Jane Young of BMCC told convention delegates. "It's said

with a sense of inevitability. But I'm tired of being told these things are going to happen, so just shut up and deal with it. Let's fight back!"

Delegates voted to approve AFT policy that reads, in part, "student assessment should be left in the hands of faculty members who know their students, their disciplines, and their institutions."

Resolutions were also passed in favor of full funding of Pell Grants and increased federal aid through the Higher Education Act, and supporting a range of changes to Bush's "No Child Left Behind" legislation.

The convention took a strong stand in defense of the right of nurses and other professionals to join unions. An impending ruling by the National Labor Relations Board in what are known as the "Kentucky River" cases could severely damage that right in the private sector (see left, Labor in Brief). Delegates also rallied support for an AFT-affiliated nurses' local in Englewood, NJ, which went on strike against a management attempt to slash pensions.

The AFT also voiced support for union rights abroad. The month before the convention, striking teach-



Michael Perna, adjunct associate professor at Hunter College, addressed delegates on the Iraq war on the floor of the AFT convention in July.

ers in Oaxaca, Mexico, were violently attacked by state police, and a number of teachers were severely injured (see page 10). Delegates overwhelmingly approved a PSC-sponsored resolution that condemned the attack, and supported the teacher union's demands for fair salaries and adequate school funding.

PSC delegates opened up the discussion at the convention even when they didn't win the votes. For example, in discussion of an AFT leadership resolution criticizing state repression in China, PSC delegates Frank Crocco, Patrick Lloyd and others argued that the issue could not be understood without also discussing how US-based multinationals profit from these abuses. "We thought the AFT should support Chinese workers, not a particular foreign policy," said Lloyd an assistant professor at Kingsborough. While the resolution was passed without amendment, it was a debate that reflected how the AFT has begun to change in recent years.

ANTI-WAR

This year saw a dramatic change in the AFT's position on the war in Iraq. In previous years, the PSC and other locals pushed hard for the AFT to take a stand against the war, but were unsuccessful. This year delegates voted for the AFT to "oppose the war in Iraq and call upon our country's leaders to withdraw all troops, bases and military operations in a rapid and timely manner."

The resolution goes on to state that the "AFT [will] actively encourage its state and local affiliates to join the AFT in working with the AFL-CIO to end the war..." As PSC retiree and delegate Bill Friedheim

told convention delegates, "This resolution calls on our leaders to build an anti-war movement inside of the AFT and the AFL-CIO."

The vote marked the first time that the AFT, which strongly supported US foreign policy during the Cold War, has opposed a US military action abroad. "The larger legitimacy of the AFT's opposition to the war offers the possibility of reaching more people, and the resolution really requires that the AFT educate its members," said PSC Treasurer Mike Fabricant. "It's re-energizing, renewing and reaffirming."

ENERGIZING

On the fighting in Lebanon and northern Israel, the convention adopted a resolution condemning Hezbollah and voicing support for Israel's actions. Introducing the resolution, AFT Vice President Herb Magidson said, "Some may say this is a one-sided resolution. It is. It is completely against terrorists and terrorism, and it identifies the culprits." Charles Delman, an Illinois delegate who is the son of a Holocaust survivor, proposed a substitute resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire by all sides. This was defeated by about a 3-to-2 margin, with many delegations divided.

There was also debate over a resolution on immigration, an issue that affects educators across the country. The convention approved a resolution proposed by NYSUT, which supports a path to permanent US residency for currently undocumented workers; urges that the right to join a union be guaranteed for all workers; and concludes that successful immigration reform must also must "consider the root causes of migration."

The new contract

Support for scholarship

By DANIEL CAPLICE LYNCH
LaGuardia

Beginning this Fall, new provisions in the PSC/CUNY contract will offer bargaining unit members more time and more money for scholarship. In several different ways, the contract offers increased support for research, writing, artistic creation and professional development. This article describes how the changes will work.

Some of these advances were won in exchange for changing the time to tenure at CUNY from five to seven years, and this change is also discussed below.

80% SABBATICAL PAY

Previously, instructional staff who took a sabbatical received only 50% of their regular pay for that period. That figure is now increased to 80% for both full-year and half-year sabbaticals. (A limited number of half-year sabbaticals will continue to be available at 100% of regular salary, as in the past.)

The new rate goes into effect with the Fall 2006 semester. Thus, those who were granted full-year, half-pay sabbaticals for the 2006-2007 academic year will now be paid at the new 80% rate.

The union negotiated substantial funds in the contract to support this increase in sabbatical pay (as well as the other measures detailed here). So there should be no financial incentive for college presidents to deny sabbaticals – they cannot cry poormouth. The PSC is establishing a committee of union members to monitor the implementation of both sabbaticals and reassigned time.

MORE TIME FOR NEW HIRES

Full-time faculty initially appointed without tenure to a professorial title on or after September 1, 2006 will now have 24 contact hours of reassigned time to “engage in scholarly and/or creative activities related to their academic disciplines.” This doubles the reassigned time for new hires that was won in the last contract.

The time for scholarship and creative work is to be used during a new faculty member’s first five years. He or she does not need administration or department chair approval for the content of the work; management or department chairs may play a role only in scheduling when it is taken.

Doubling this reassigned time for new faculty not only benefits those working towards tenure – it also gives our departments something attractive to offer prospective hires.

(Note: Virtually all full-time faculty who started work at CUNY Spring 2006 this Fall have an official appointment date of September 1 and will receive this expanded reassigned time,



even if they teach their first class August 30. Where newly hired faculty do teach a class before their September 1 appointment date, they should be paid for that class at the adjunct rate.)

EQUITY FOR NEW LIBRARY & COUNSELING FACULTY

When the first 12 hours of reassigned time for newly hired faculty were won in the last contract, CUNY management insisted on excluding faculty in counseling and library titles. The union fought hard and won an end to that exclusion in this contract.

Untenured librarians and counselors appointed to professorial titles on or after September 1, 2006, will receive the equivalent of 24 contact hours of reassigned time during their first five years to engage in scholarly or creative activities in their disciplines.

And more good news: effective September 1 of this year, untenured library and counseling faculty in professorial titles who were initially appointed on or after September 1, 2002 – in other words, those excluded in the last contract – will receive the equivalent of 12 contact hours of reassigned time. This time is to be used in the next three academic years, between September 2006 and August 2009, regardless of the faculty member’s tenure status.

LONGER TENURE CLOCK

As part of the overall contract settlement, the PSC agreed to support an increase in the tenure clock from

five to seven years, which became law this summer. (CLTs and faculty at the Hunter Campus schools on tenure-bearing lines are excluded from this change, and it does not affect how lecturers gain a Certificate of Continuous Employment).

Clearly, opinion among our members about this measure is mixed. The extended tenure clock provides more opportunity to establish a laboratory, develop experiments and publish results, and many faculty in the natural sciences have voiced support for the change. In any discipline, publications and especially books need time to plan, research, write, rewrite and submit to academic publishers. The peer review process can seem interminable to the hopeful writer, so the two extra years can give some of us a little breathing space.

But many other PSC members, particularly in the community colleges, thought that five years gave us ample chances to demonstrate our teaching skills, to develop a record of contribution to the department and the college, and to offer evidence of our growth as scholars or as artists. Another two years added to the tenure clock might seem to many anxious candidates like simmering in purgatory for another two years.

For good or ill, the change in the time to tenure does not affect faculty with a tenure appointment date before September 1, 2006, who are not yet tenured. Those with appointment date of September 1, 2006, who decided to take a position at CUNY when the five-year tenure clock was

in effect will have one year to make an irrevocable choice between the five-year or seven-year timetable.

ADJUNCT PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND

The new contract also includes CUNY’s first-ever grant program specifically for teaching adjuncts.

Established September 1, 2006, the Adjunct Professional Development Fund will have half a million dollars to award professional development grants to adjuncts and eligible Continuing Education faculty. Grants of up to \$3,000 will be awarded until the funds have been expended.

The PSC will administer the fund by establishing an Adjunct Professional Development Selections Committee that will develop a standard application form, review applications and administer the grants. Applications will be received and grants awarded on a rolling basis. To be eligible, an adjunct must be teaching six or more contact hours in the current semester and have taught one or more courses for the two most recent consecutive semesters (not counting summer). Applications must have the approval of one chairperson of the department employing the adjunct.

Continuing Education teachers appointed to a 20+ hour position that will continue for more than six months, and who have held such a position for the two most recent consecutive semesters, are also eligible to apply.

Application forms will be available in October.

EXPANDED HEO/CLT PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND

The HEO/CLT Professional Development Fund will see a substantial increase in the maximum size of a grant: this figure goes from \$2,000 to \$3,000. The total amount of money available to the fund will also be increased, rising by 9.5%, bringing CUNY’s contribution to \$550,000.

Grants from the HEO/CLT Professional Development Fund will be made on a rolling basis, and must be approved before the activity. For an application and more information, see www.psc-cuny.org/HeoClProfDev.htm, or call Linda Slifkin at 212-354-1252. Examples of past grants can be found in the article on page 9 of the January 2005 *Clarion* (available at www.psc-cuny.org/communication.htm).

LEAVES, AWARDS & TRAVEL

PSC-CUNY Research Awards will be increased by about 9.5%, as will funds for travel allowances.

There will be an increase from

four to five weeks in the 50 professional leaves for library faculty, described in the contract’s Article 25.4, which are used for research, scholarly writing, and other professional activities.

Ending a concession introduced in the 1996-2000 contract, faculty counselors hired since September 1998 will now get the same annual leave and workweek as those hired before that date. This is not directly connected to writing or research, since restoration of these employment rights is unconditional. But more annual leave does improve the conditions for counseling faculty scholarship.

There are a number of other new provisions in this contract, and *Clarion* will describe them in other articles this Fall. But the scope of improvements in support for scholarly work is something that stands out, and these changes will make a real difference in members’ professional lives.

CALENDAR

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 8: 4:00 pm / Part-Time Personnel Committee meeting at the PSC office, 61 Broadway, 15th floor. Contact Marcia Newfield, mnewfield@psccmail.org.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 12: 6:00 pm / Women’s Committee meeting at the new PSC office. Contact Norah Chase, nchase391@aol.com.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 21 / Adjunct pension counselor Ellen Balleisen will counsel part-timers on retirement options in the new PSC office. Ellen is in weekly, alternating Thursdays and Fridays. Call Linda Slifkin to make an appointment, 212-354-1252.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 25: 1:00 pm / Retirees Chapter meeting featuring a report on the state of the union by President Barbara Bowen at the new PSC office. Contact Linda Slifkin, 212-354-1252.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26: 6:00 pm / Health and Safety Watchdogs meeting, at the new PSC office. Call the Health and Safety desk, 212-354-1252 x208.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 28: 1:00pm / Conference on the 2005 NYC transit strike at CUNY Graduate Center. Details at www.psc-cuny.org/calendar.htm.

SATURDAY & SUNDAY, OCTOBER 7-8: 9:00 am / Avon Walk for Breast Cancer. Contact the Avon Walk New York Office, 212-586-8720 or www.walk.avonfoundation.org.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 13, 6:00 pm / Labor Goes to the Movies at the new PSC office. Contact Dania Rajendra, drajendra@psccmail.org. No RSVPs.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 17 / Vito Ruvolo, TIAA-CREF counselor, will counsel members on retirement savings options in the new PSC office. Call Linda Slifkin to make an appointment, 212-354-1252.

MEXICO

Teachers strike for democracy

By GERARDO RÉNIQUE
City College

Thousands of teachers and citizens marched silently through the streets of Oaxaca, Mexico on August 13, mourning a protester who died during a peaceful demonstration and demanding release of six people who were recently detained or disappeared. Schoolteacher Elia Silva, wife of disappeared teacher and former union leader Erangelio Mendoza, told the crowd that the illegal detention of her husband and others “will not intimidate the struggle.”

What began as a teachers’ strike for better wages and more resources for students has now sparked a broad movement to oust Oaxaca’s corrupt and autocratic state government. The strike started on May 22, seeking both improvements in teachers’ salaries and working conditions and broader educational reforms. The teachers’ union demanded free lunches, books and uniforms for Oaxaca’s mostly poor and rural student body to offset moves toward the privatization of public education and to improve learning conditions.

A teachers’ encampment in this colonial city’s historic downtown swelled to fill many square blocks, as support for the strikers grew. On June 14, a violent attack by state police failed to evict the strikers, despite sending dozens of teachers to the hospital. The attack backfired on the government: public anger has now turned the teacher’s strike into an unprecedented democratic insurgency, demanding the resignation of Governor Ulises Ruiz.

Ruiz was declared winner of the July 2004 state election by a federal tribunal, after a hotly contested vote marked by charges of fraud. He was candidate of the Institutional Revolutionary Party, or PRI, which ruled Mexico for decades as a virtual one-party state. Since then, his administration has been marred by a level of corruption and authoritarianism that is remarkable even in the history of the PRI.

BAD GOVERNANCE

During Ruiz’s brief tenure, Oaxaca has suffered 36 political assassinations and dozens of arbitrary detentions and disappearances. During the current conflict, three Indian leaders and a child were ambushed and killed by paramilitary forces, at least six teachers and opponents have been illegally detained or disappeared, and government goons have carried out shootings against the newspaper *Noticias* and Radio Universidad. Local police have now declared their refusal to participate in repressing demonstrators, so the governor relies mostly on gunmen linked to the PRI’s political machinery and some semi-military specialized police teams.

With the largest indigenous population in Mexico, the state of Oaxaca is also one of the poorest. Home to 356 of Mexico’s 400 poorest municipalities, Oaxaca is also the state with the highest rate of school desertion and one of the poorest educational records. This situation has been exacerbated during the last decade as a result of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and privatization of public services, state and community-controlled lands and resources.

Unrestricted access of foreign goods into Mexico’s internal market – including corn and beans, the main staples of the Oaxacan diet –



AAUP member Elizabeth Palley and her husband, PSC member Alex Vitale, at a PSC rally at the Mexican Consulate in support of Oaxacan teachers. The AFT also backed the Mexican union.

have led to a collapse of local agriculture, and these changes have pushed thousands across the border into low-paying jobs in the US economy. The link between NAFTA, Mexican poverty and emigration gets little attention in the US media, but in Oaxaca it is widely understood. The remittances of Oaxacan migrants now constitute the state’s second largest source of income after tourism.

UNFAIR TRADE

As Mexico has turned toward an economy based on unrestricted free markets, Oaxaca’s rich timber and mineral resources and its potential for tourism have attracted a number of transnational corporations. With most of the beaches, minerals, water and forest within the boundaries of indigenous communal lands, investors established a partnership with the PRI political bosses who have dominated state politics during the last seven decades. Through legal chicanery and outright violence, the last two PRI administrations arbitrarily imposed local authorities, established paramilitary forces and jailed opponents to gain access to communal resources.

For many Oaxacans, the violent June 14 attack against the teacher’s strike was just the last straw. Residents of downtown Oaxaca were already angry about poorly executed projects of urban renewal, carried out by a construction company owned by Gov. Ruiz’s brother, which had degraded some of the state capital’s best-loved parks and public spaces. Indiscriminate use of tear gas shot from a helicopter made anyone who lived downtown feel like they were under assault, and residents offered shelter, water and assistance to the teachers when the police attacked.

When the police attack destroyed the equipment of *Radio Plantón* – a radio station the teacher’s union had operated from the encampment – students took over a local university radio station to counteract the anti-union distortions being broadcast on local and national networks. By noon, with the sup-

port of students, union members and neighbors, teachers retook the 50 square blocks of their encampment in the downtown area.

During the day, rural communities sent delegations with supplies and ready to stand by “their” teachers in the *plantón* or protest encampment. The Catholic Church ordered the doors of its churches opened as sanctuaries around the clock. Late in the evening a wide range of social and political organizations called for a “mega-march” to demand the resignation of Gov. Ruiz. With 300,000 to 400,000 participants, observers said the march was the largest demonstration in the history of Oaxaca. When a march on June 28 drew an even larger crowd, close to a million people, it was clear that support for the teachers against repression had become a veritable democratic insurgency.

Hundreds of unions, indigenous organizations, neighborhood groups, and student and professional associations have coalesced into the *Asamblea Popular del Pueblo de Oaxaca* (Oaxacan Peoples’ Assembly or APPO). Citing constitutional provisions that allow for the replacement of a governor who has acted illegally and arbitrarily, the groups under the umbrella of APPO have waged a massive campaign of nonviolent civil disobedience that has brought the state government to a standstill. In the last month, human blockades have shut down state government offices. The movement is not confined to the capital city of Oaxaca: citizens in the state’s rural communities have been taking back their municipal governments from officials imposed by Governor Ruiz.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

In a bold move, several women’s organizations took over the state-controlled radio and television station. Under the control of the governor, it had been a constant source of misinformation and distortion. Thousands of citizens have rallied around the station and its broadcast antennas that are scattered throughout the state of Oaxaca. Fearing gov-

ernment retaliation – like an attack on Radio Universidad after it came under student control – citizen groups stand watch outside the occupied installations.

An important consequence of Oaxaca’s democratic insurgency has been an effective end to the uninterrupted control that the PRI had maintained over state politics through a well-oiled political machine, keeping the population in check through a network of *caciques* (political bosses). Following a call by the teachers’ union and APPO to cast a “punishing vote” against the parties in power, PRI was soundly defeated in the July 2 national elections by a margin of four to one in favor of the center-left opposition PRD (Party of the Democratic Revolution).

DEMOCRATIC INSURGENCY

The goals of Oaxaca’s democratic insurgency, however, go beyond electoral participation. APPO is seeing a new kind of state government that would be “respectful of human rights, indigenous communal life and municipal autonomy.” With that goal in mind, hundreds of academics, constitutional scholars, activists and popular leaders took part in a forum on August 16 and 17 to discuss possible paths for “reestablishment of ... democracy and political stability through the creation of a new constitution for our state, to reflect the voices and the desires of the Oaxacan people.”

In the atmosphere of uncertainty that has followed Mexico’s unresolved July 2 presidential election, the outcome of Oaxaca’s crisis is also uncertain. Violence and the threat of violence continue to increase. The government has created a website with the names, photos and home addresses of union leaders, opposition politicians and academics stand accused as intellectual perpetrators of “subversion” against the government. A red “X” is placed over the silhouette of José Jiménez Colmenares, a teacher’s husband who was killed during a peaceful march on August 10; others who have been disappeared or taken prisoner are labeled, “This one has already fallen!”

NATIONAL CRISIS

Even more troublesome is the fact that local authorities have issued *ordenes de captura* against 50 to 100 democratic activists. Among those is included a good friend of mine – Victor Raúl Martínez Vásquez. He is a university professor, sociologist, member of the Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales of the Universidad Autónoma Benito Juárez de Oaxaca (UABJO). The author of several books, he has written extensively on the history and politics of both education and the teacher’s movement in Oaxaca. He is also a regular contributor to local and national newspapers, and has lately contributed some sharp analyses of the current Oaxacan crisis that I am sure the government does not like.

As *Clarion* goes to press, Bishop Samuel Ruiz of Chiapas and a group of intellectuals seeking an end to the crisis are trying to mediate with President Fox and representatives of Oaxaca’s grassroots movements. APPO and the Oaxacan teachers’ union have increased their presence in Mexico City, and Oaxacan protests there have won increased media attention. There is a growing recognition that, as one newspaper put it, “The institutional crisis in Oaxaca has become a national problem.” But it remains to be seen how that problem will be solved.

In Oaxaca, teachers stand their ground against government violence.

THE PSC'S NEW SECRETARY

Cross-CUNY experience

By DANIA RAJENDRA

Arthurine DeSola, the PSC's new secretary, says she has lived "an entire lifetime" across CUNY.

Working in higher education officer titles for the last decade and a half, DeSola is also a former faculty member who brings experience from five CUNY campuses to the union's leadership.

While DeSola earned her BA at St. John's, her undergraduate experience was shaped by CUNY – in a way that drove her own interest in counseling. "I actually started out as what CUNY calls 'a basic skills student.' I was in the College Admissions Program – CAP – which St. John's had modeled after CUNY's 'special programs.' CAP gave students who had a desire, but not the grades, an opportunity to go to college."

The program involved one semester of remedial coursework and weekly meetings with a counselor. "The person who worked with me was Maryanne Cursio and she was going for her doctorate," DeSola remembers. "She really left an indelible impression on me. Through the workshops, I moved from being a marginal student to a student who made Dean's List at the end of the first year."

After graduation, DeSola worked at York College – her first CUNY campus – as a college assistant for several months before beginning graduate school at Hunter College in 1974. Her master's degree is in college counseling and student development.

After graduating from Hunter College, DeSola worked at Bronx Community College for a year before joining LaGuardia Community College. "That was my first professional position as a counselor and I was on a faculty line at that time," she recalls. She remained a faculty member in LaGuardia's counseling department from 1977 to 1989.

COUNSELOR

LaGuardia is where she met her husband, Stanley Rumph, who works there today as a financial aid counselor. After a three-year courtship, she tells *Clarion*, "we decided to tie the knot – on a date that was in the middle of registration!" She laughs as she remembers: "And I said, 'Oh, no, we can't be away for too long.' So we had a honeymoon over the weekend and we were back in the office Monday or Tuesday!"

In 1989, DeSola was approved for a sabbatical. She was preparing to leave campus – "I was almost out the door" – when she was invited to apply for an HEO position in the office of Queensborough's Dean of Students, where she had done an internship while earning her master's degree. She applied, was hired, and spent the next 17 years at Queensborough – she began as assistant to the Dean of Students, followed by interim director of the College Discovery program, and returned to Student Services as a counselor.

She never took that sabbatical.

Though DeSola has worked in the CUNY system for 30 years, she still identifies strongly with students' experiences. Like many who attend CUNY, DeSola comes from an immigrant family background; she grew up in Queens with both her father's extended family – originally from Curaçao – and her mother's – from the island of Jamaica. "I grew up in a working-class family," she says, noting that without student loans and state financial aid, she could not have afforded to go to college: "People may say, 'Well, it's cheap to go to CUNY' – but if you can't afford it, it's not cheap."

STUDENTS' STRUGGLES

It's a struggle DeSola says she has seen over and over in the students she's worked with at City University. "When you are seeing them periodically, monitoring their progress, working with them to get them through various hurdles, you have a deep appreciation of what a struggle it really is," she says. "When I have sat on committees and have been given a voice, I really pride myself on having voiced concerns on behalf of students."

It's that interest in advocacy and problem-solving that drew DeSola to union work. Her coworkers began coming to her with problems, she says, particularly after she began



Arthurine DeSola

attending meetings of the faculty PSC chapter at Queensborough as a HEO representative. DeSola credits former PSC Treasurer John Hyland with getting her involved in the union beyond her own campus. "In his quiet, unassuming way, he encouraged me to do some lobbying work," she recalls. DeSola was later elected as a union delegate, chaired HEO-CLT Professional Development Fund, and then stood in the union-wide election last Spring.

Her election marked the first time that one of the PSC's principal officers has come out of the HEO ranks. "It is a tremendous step in the right direction," DeSola says. At the same time, she adds, "While I am a member in the Higher Educational Officer series, I don't just represent HEOs – I represent all members in the union."

Voicing concerns on behalf of students

THE UNION'S FIRST VICE PRESIDENT

Political scientist, faculty activist

By DANIA RAJENDRA

Steve London is known for clocking long, sometimes exhausting hours working for the PSC. When London needs to recharge, he heads to the Catskills and walks in the woods, immersing himself in the natural world.

"Being with wildlife and trees, I find that soothing," London says. "There's a largeness to it that helps me put things in perspective. In part, it's going back to my roots – I grew up in the mountains. So the mountains are a safe place. It feels like home."

It might surprise many who know him at CUNY, but London grew up in Clarksburg, West Virginia. "I'm a hillbilly," he says, a bit tongue-in-cheek, since he's lived in the New York metro area since he came to Rutgers as an undergraduate in the 1960s. At Rutgers he studied political science and was involved in the political movements of the time, especially the anti-war and Jewish counter-cultural movements. From Rutgers, he went to work for the New York City Health Department and then to graduate school at NYU to continue his work as a political scientist.

After several years of writing for the Health PAC Bulletin, London taught part-time at area colleges, and in 1980, took a full-time job at SUNY College at Old Westbury. There, he served as the Vice President for Academics of the UUP union chapter. In 1984, London completed his doctorate, and in 1986 he

came to Brooklyn College. Immediately, he joined the fight for more resources for CUNY and against tuition hikes. That activism led London to run for chapter chair in 1993, a position he won and held until PSC members elected him First Vice President in 2000.

"I love teaching at Brooklyn College," London says. "I found the discussions and the interaction incredibly stimulating." He helped design the curriculum for many courses at Brooklyn, including a "core" course, "People, Power and Politics," that he particularly enjoyed teaching. "We dealt with very difficult subjects – race, class and gender," London says. "The students were honest and they were direct. I was always impressed with students' ability to feel that the classroom was a special place."

EXCITEMENT

As a faculty activist and chapter chair, London says he found "an energy, an excitement, and a kind of critical mass of bright, progressive faculty and students at Brooklyn that allowed us to come together to help engage in a lot of CUNY-focused social change projects."

He gives an example from the mid-90s, when CUNY management asked the colleges for retrenchment plans. "The union led the fight on campus for the president *not* to submit a retrenchment plan," he remembers.



Steve London

"And we succeeded. As a result, there was great unity and the morale did not fall like at some other campuses." Such victories only happen, he notes, "when the faculty understand solidarity and sticking together."

London has published on a variety of subjects: labor, health policy, urban issues and

more. The growth of the adjunct workforce – of which he was a part – and increased corporatization of universities have been among his research topics. A common thread in all his academic work is this: London studies, teaches and publishes about people making change.

DIFFICULT TIMES

"We're living through a difficult time, politically," London says about the present. "We have many ideas, but those ideas meet a political reality in which we find that we are limited in what we can do. The challenge is to have a vision of change, and implement it in real time." He looks up. "That's politics," the political scientist says with relish.

When London's not working on implementing change in real time, he's home with his family. His wife, Ronni Natov, is an English professor at Brooklyn – the two recently became grandparents. He has two step-sons: one teaches math at City Tech, while the other is a radio journalist in California. His daughter-in-law is a cantor.

"We're a CUNY family," he says. "I take tremendous pleasure in them and their accomplishments. And just holding my new granddaughter gives me so much energy, I want to make the world worthy of her. She should grow up in a just world."

Profiles of President Barbara Bowen and Treasurer Mike Fabricant appeared in the Summer Clarion.

A focus on people making change

NY labor: 'Take back the House'

By CLARION STAFF

New York State United Teachers (NYSUT) and the New York State AFL-CIO have both adopted a "take back the House" strategy for the fall election for Congress, breaking with years of tradition. The two statewide labor groups have usually endorsed incumbents from both parties – but at their biennial endorsement meetings in August, both backed Democratic and Working Families Party candidates in almost all Republican-held congressional districts.

Democrats need to win at least 15 more seats nationally to take control of the US House of Representatives in this year's congressional elections. New York will play a central role in deciding whether this happens – a fact that comes as a surprise to many, since New York is often thought of as a heavily Democratic state.

"This year saw a significant break with past NYSUT and AFL-CIO endorsement practice," said Steve London, PSC First Vice President. "Local presidents and NYSUT leadership united behind the effort to roll back the right-wing takeover of Congress. With five to seven competitive races in New York, we can make a huge contribution to changing this country's political direction."

At the convention of the New York State AFL-CIO's Committee on Political Education (COPE), there was a revolt from the convention floor to overturn its Executive Council's cautious "no endorsement" recommendation in several key Republican-held seats. "Delegates' enthusiasm and energy about winning back the House was palpable," said London.

Eileen Moran, co-chair of the PSC Legislation Committee, led the fight to change the "no endorsement" recommendation in the 13th Congressional District (Staten Island and Brooklyn), currently represented by Bush loyalist Vito Fossella. "We've got enemies in Congress and we need to get them out!" warned Moran, as she successfully

NY races crucial to Democrats



NYSUT endorsed David Mejias to replace incumbent Peter King on Long Island.

argued for endorsement of Democratic challenger Stephen Harrison.

"The delegates smelled blood," commented Jim Perlstein, co-chair of the PSC's Solidarity Committee. "There was a sense that labor could win big in November, and personalities and private deals got less attention than issues."

After the first "no endorsement" recommendation was overturned in Nassau County's 3rd Congressional District, endorsing Democrat/Working Families candidate David Mejias in his challenge to Republican Peter King, the mood of the delegates at the convention was clear. Each successive "no endorsement" recommendation in Republican-held seats was overturned and the candidate backed by the local area labor federation won support, with near-unanimous votes.

Endorsement requires a two-thirds vote of New York COPE delegates. In the past, Republican repre-

sentatives did a few favors for some unions and gained their loyalty. "Even though their voting records were overwhelmingly anti-labor, these Republican incumbents were able to do enough favors to split the labor vote," said Moran. "But this year the 300 delegates, representing more than two million workers in New York State, were going to have none of it."

In the end, NYSUT endorsed challengers in seven, and the AFL-CIO in eight, out of the nine Republican-held seats in New York State. The lone Republican endorsement from both organizations was for upstate Representative John McHugh, in the 23rd CD, who had the support of local labor leaders.

DIFFERENCES ON TOWNS

The AFL-CIO refused to endorse any incumbent who voted for the Central American Free Trade Act (CAFTA). That meant Democratic incumbent Ed Towns, who voted for CAFTA and was absent on some important close votes, did

not receive the AFL-CIO endorsement in the 10th Congressional District.

The PSC recommended the endorsement of City Councilmember Charles Barron in the 10th CD because of his strong advocacy and effectiveness on behalf of higher education and other PSC issues. Also, Towns was absent on an important higher education budget vote that cut Pell grants by billions of dollars and increased the cost of student loans. That bill passed by two votes in the House of Representatives. While NYSUT ultimately endorsed the incumbent, the AFL-CIO stayed neutral.

NEW YORK STATE RACES

At the state level neither NYSUT nor the AFL-CIO veered from their established practice of mainly endorsing incumbents in the New York State Assembly and Senate. The net result is that NYSUT and the AFL-CIO support electing a strongly Democratic Assembly and a weaker Republican State Senate.

There was little controversy over statewide races as both NYSUT and AFL-CIO endorsed Eliot Spitzer for Governor, David Paterson for Lt. Governor, Andrew Cuomo for Attorney General, Alan Hevesi for Comptroller, and Hillary Clinton for US Senate.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

PSC members can become involved early in the campaigns of the following NYSUT- and AFL-CIO-endorsed candidates:

FOR CONGRESS

David Mejias (Nassau, 3rd CD); Steve Harrison (Staten Island/Brooklyn, 13th CD); John Hall (Putnam-Dutchess-Orange-Westchester, 19th CD); Kirsten Gillibrand (Columbia-Green-Saratoga-Warren-Washington-Rensselaer-Dutchess-Schoharie-Essex, 20th CD).

CLOSE STATE LEGISLATURE RACES

NY State Senate: Kevin Parker (Brooklyn, District 21) is facing a serious, well-funded primary chal-

lenge from Noach Dear, an outspoken supporter of funding private schools. Velmanette Montgomery (Brooklyn, District 18) and John Sabini (Queens, District 13) are also facing tough challenges in the primary, Eric Adams (Brooklyn, District 20) is running for an open seat where there are four candidates in the primary; and Bill Perkins (Manhattan, District 30) is running for the open seat formerly held by David Paterson.

NY Assembly: Ellen Young (Queens, District 22); Rory Lancman (Queens, District 25); Alec Brooks-Krasny (Brooklyn, District 46); Hakeem Jeffries (Brooklyn, District 57); Sylvia Friedman (Manhattan, District 74); Michael Benjamin (Bronx, District 79).

Representing the PSC at the NYSUT endorsement conference were First Vice-President Steve London, Secretary Arthurine DeSola, and Legislation Committee Co-chairs Eileen Moran and Vera Weekes. At the AFL-CIO convention Jim Perlstein, Solidarity Committee Co-chair, joined London and Moran.

PRIMARY VOTING

All PSC members who are eligible to vote in the primary election on September 12 are urged to do so. Polls are open from 6:00 am until 9:00 pm. The PSC website will list dates when union volunteers will phone members in targeted districts to urge their support for union-backed candidates in the primary.

"Usually the phone banks operate from 4 to 8 pm, and even if you have only a half hour to offer it will be much appreciated," said Moran. "There are several state Senators and Assembly members who have consistently supported our agenda but still are facing tough races." Moran also encouraged members to get involved in the critical congressional campaigns. For more information, or if you would like to contact one of the campaigns directly, please e-mail Eileen Moran at eyedon@earthlink.net.

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15-MINUTE ACTIVIST

Come see the new PSC office!

The PSC will host tours of its new office on Thursday, September 28 and Friday, September 29. The space includes modern offices, natural light, more meeting space, and a union hall that will host Delegate Assemblies and Labor Goes to the Movies, among other events.

On Thursday, the tours will be offered on an ongoing basis from 4:00 to 6:00 pm. On Friday, the tours will be offered on the hour, from 11:00 am to 4:00 pm. Bring photo identification for building security.

The new PSC office is in Lower Manhattan at 61 Broadway, 15th floor, just south of Trinity Church. The new location is near several subway stops: the 1 at Rector Street, the N, R or W at Rector Street, the 4 or 5 at Wall Street, the J, M, or Z at Broad Street or the 2 or 3 at Wall Street (see map on page 2). It's also near several express bus stops and the PATH train.

For more information, call the PSC office. The number is the same, 212-354-1252.