

Clarion

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



SEPTEMBER 2005



GRIEVANCE Third win at LaGuardia

Arbitrator finds Gene Yao's application for promotion was improperly denied.

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SEPTEMBER

If you care about getting a fair contract, come to the PSC's mass membership on Thursday, September 29 at 6:00 pm in the Great Hall at Cooper Union, East 7th Street and Third Avenue in Manhattan. The meeting will feature

the latest information from the PSC bargaining team, as well as a discussion of the action we will take to achieve a good settlement. The union's strength is built on your participation – so plan to come and invite your colleagues. **PAGES 6, 7, 11**

POLITICS

Primary endorsements

The PSC throws its support to local and City-wide candidates strong on union issues and CUNY.

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LABOR DAY

United parade in NYC Sept. 10

The national labor movement splits, but New York activists are focusing on solidarity.

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TIAA-CREF

CUNY drops 'one-third rule'

The PSC fought long and hard for a change in pension policy. CUNY Trustees made the change in June.

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ACADEMIC FREEDOM

Academic bill of wrongs

The right wing is using state legislatures to undermine academic freedom and silence dissent.

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Welfare Fund changes adjunct health care

By PETER HOGNESS

On July 27, PSC/CUNY Welfare Fund Trustees approved a major change in adjunct health insurance.

Qualified adjuncts previously received individual coverage with no monthly premium through Empire Blue Cross Direct Health Maintenance Organization (HMO), although co-pays were required. Starting this fall, a no-premium option will still be available, but through HIP Prime HMO. Adjuncts electing to stay with their current Empire Blue Cross HMO will be required to pay a monthly premium of \$59 per month for individual coverage.

OPTIONS

(Adjuncts with health coverage through the Welfare Fund will receive a mailing soon with the effective date and other details. Those who live in New Jersey, upstate New York and Connecticut will have slightly different options.)

The change was sparked by an increase of 15.5% in the group premium that Empire charges to the Welfare Fund for adjunct coverage.

Cost hike forced move

"With the current situation of the Welfare Fund, the Trustees felt the Fund was in no position to absorb this rate increase, which went into effect June 1," said WF Executive Director Larry Morgan.

"I was very reluctant to support this," said PSC First Vice President Steve London, who is also Executive Officer of the Welfare Fund. "Adjuncts did not have equivalent health insurance to full-timers even before this change. However, the financial realities are such that the Trustees felt we had to have a contribution from adjuncts for the increased cost of the Empire plan." He noted that WF restructuring had already required increased expenditures from full-time active employees and retired members.

"We understand that this is a disruption for everyone affected," Morgan told *Clarion*. "It's a disruption for those who have to change physicians, and it's a disruption for those who stay with the Empire plan but must now pay \$59 a month."

"It's tragic," said Marcia Newfield, PSC Vice President for Part-Time Affairs. "If you're attached to your doctor, having to change to someone new can cause a lot of angst." While some adjuncts will find that their current physician does belong to the HIP network, which is quite large, she said, many adjuncts will find their doctors do not.

Under both HIP Prime and Empire, co-pays will stay the same as they were previously under the Empire plan. HIP Prime coverage includes a prescription drug benefit, so adjuncts who switch will now get their medications through HIP.

PRIORITIES

"When the Trustees were deciding how to respond to Empire's price increase," London said, "one of our priorities was to make sure that adjuncts could still get individual health insurance without paying a monthly premium. Through HIP,

this option will still be available." This is particularly important for adjuncts, London said, given their low wages.

Unlike full-timers, adjuncts already had to pay the full cost of the additional premium if they wanted family coverage. The additional cost of family coverage under the Empire plan will now rise to \$619 per month. For adjuncts who choose HIP Prime, family coverage will now cost \$475 – actually \$60 less than the cost under Empire's old rates.

No-premium option now with HIP Prime

In addition to the high cost of family coverage, Morgan noted, adjuncts do not get any coverage in retirement. "Their situation is very similar to that of home care workers, who I worked with when I was with another union," Morgan said. "No health insurance means they can't afford to retire."

London noted that CUNY's contributions cover only about three-fifths of the cost of adjunct coverage. "This leaves a structural deficit which is impossible to close by

charging premiums," he explained. "If we tried to do that, the cost of the premiums would be so high that it would be impossible for adjuncts to afford it – it would be the same as not offering it at all."

UNDERFUNDED

For that reason, the WF Trustees were reluctant to charge a premium in response to Empire's rate increase, London added. "The structural problem comes from the fact that this benefit is underfunded by CUNY, and no premium can change that," he explained. "That's why the union has been pushing for the last two rounds of negotiations to get adjuncts into the City health plan, like other part-time City employees. But so far the City has been unwilling to make that move."

"Being in the City plan would allow adjuncts to get family coverage without the current premium, and have health coverage in retirement," Newfield said. "The University needs to stop evading responsibility for the health care of the people who do most of the teaching at CUNY."



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

Scholarship & the fight for social justice

● Thank you for reprinting the autobiographical essay by Kenneth B. Clark, who taught psychology at City College for 34 years. Clark was a leading figure in U.S. civil rights history, and his essay in the Summer *Clarion* reveals the early roots of his activism.

Clark is best known for the research, carried out with his wife Mamie Phipps Clark, which convinced the 1954 US Supreme Court that racism was damaging African-

American children's core identities. African American children were presented with a white doll and a brown (African American) doll and asked which one they preferred. A large majority selected the white doll, explaining that it looked pretty and the brown doll did not. When asked which doll was most like them, the children often became distressed. Some even identified themselves with the white doll. Others left the room in tears.

The results upset the Clarks greatly, as Clark described in a 1975 interview with his CCNY colleague Lawrence Nyman, who included portions of the interview in the summer issue of the journal I edit, *Encounter: Education for Meaning and Social Justice*. If you would like a copy, please write me at the Department of Psychology, CCNY, 138th St. and Convent Ave., New York, NY 10031.

Bill Crain
CCNY

Brooklyn College coverage

● I read with interest the Summer 2005 article, "Two Brooklyn College professors under attack," by Dania Rajendra and Peter Hogness, part of the PSC's "academic freedom" issue. Among other items, the article mentions a denunciatory letter sent to me by members of the School of Education faculty.

I realize that *Clarion* makes no claim to objectivity in its articles. I would have thought, however, that elemental standards of journalism (especially in an article dealing with academic freedom, a concept that envisions the free exchange of ideas) would have led the reporters to contact me for a response to the letter before publishing their article.

Had the reporters done so, they would have discovered that the three-paragraph SOE letter contained two out-and-out factual inaccuracies, including an erroneous quote attributed to me. More disturbing, the letter offered a peculiar definition of academic freedom, in that it demanded that a professor cease speaking publicly on a matter that involves state and federal educational policies. Academic freedom normally exists to protect the right of professors to comment on political issues, not to suppress that right.

Robert David Johnson
Brooklyn College

Clarion editor Peter Hogness responds:

Here is what our news story said about the School of Education faculty letter:

"The Sun's article quoted only two faculty members at Brooklyn College. One of them, history professor Robert David Johnson, was featured prominently, denouncing the 'extremist beliefs articulated by Professor Parmar.' In June almost every faculty member in the School of Education signed a letter addressed to Johnson, asking him to refrain from attacking other faculty members through the press."

As readers can see, the article did not quote the Ed School letter on any of its specifics, and did not mention the two points whose accuracy Johnson disputes. If *Clarion* had described the Ed School letter's content in any detail, it would have been appropriate to ask Johnson for a response – but he does not appear to disagree with anything that we actually wrote.

There is no dispute over the fact that Johnson was quoted prominently in the *Sun*, that he attacked Parmar's views as "extremist," or that Education School faculty asked him not to attack colleagues in the press. *Clarion* readers can decide for themselves whether or not such a request is appropriate.

Clarion does not claim to be neutral or without opinions. We do, however, aim to be both fair and informative in our news coverage – and we succeed often enough to be named as the best union newspaper of our size in the United States (see page 6).



Iraqi union activists attended the AFL-CIO convention and encouraged delegates' opposition to the occupation. From left, Houzan Mahmoud, Falah Hussein, Aprim Khoshaba, Hangaw Khan, and Khalil Mashhadani.

Third straight win for PSC

By DANIA RAJENDRA

In July the administration of LaGuardia Community College lost another dispute with the PSC. It was the third case in six months in which an arbitrator or judge ruled that LaGuardia had violated the union contract.

In the latest ruling, an arbitrator found that LaGuardia President Gail Mellow had improperly denied a promotion to Gene Yao, who sought an associate professorship. Professors at the campus say Mellow's high-handed management style has alienated faculty and lowered morale.

"What she did to me is very wrong," said Yao, who is in the Computer Information Systems Department. "I was really held hostage."

ADVISED TO WITHDRAW

Yao had applied for promotion to associate professor in 2001. The departmental and college-wide P&B committees approved his promotion, but Mellow rejected it. She told Yao he should find a senior faculty mentor other than department chair Gerald Meyer and complete an externship outside the college to learn new skills for the promotion. Yao told Clarion that when he did both and reapplied, administration officials told him, "You don't stand a chance," and advised him to withdraw his application.

"I was very upset," Yao remembered. "It's only fair that anyone who applies should not be prejudged and should have a chance to be reviewed." In response, he set up a meeting with Vice President for Academic Affairs John Bihn, his new mentor and Meyer. "The purpose of the meeting was for me to find out what was really going on," he said. "I wanted to know why I didn't stand a chance to be promoted." But at the meeting, Yao said, Bihn only criticized Meyer, and said nothing about why he was not looked upon favorably for promotion.

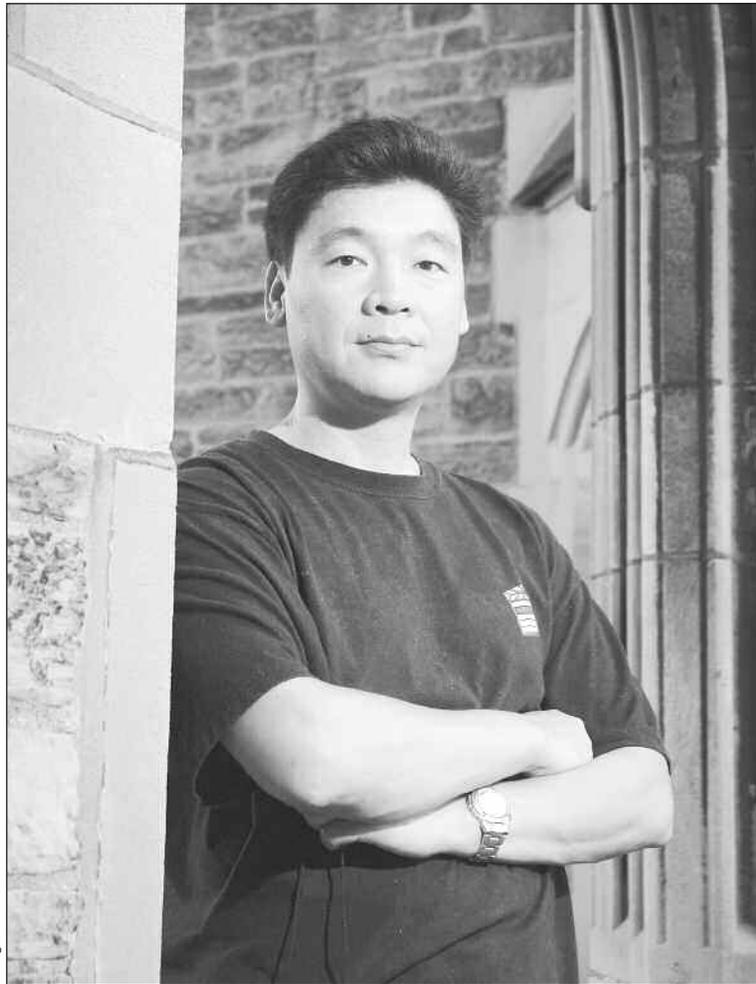
When the college Personnel & Budget Committee met, it again voted to approve Yao's promotion. Mellow looked "angry and upset after the vote," Meyer testified at the arbitration hearing. Soon after the vote, Meyer testified, Mellow summoned him to her office and said, "I want you to know that Gene Yao will never thrive in this college as long as you are the chair."

CREDIBILITY DOUBTED

Mellow testified that she had never said this, but the arbitrator did not believe her. Reviewing the evidence, arbitrator Bonnie Siber Weinstock wrote that she was "persuaded" that, contrary to the president's testimony, Mellow had in fact made this statement.

Meyer "had offered to step down [as chair] so Mr. Yao could be promoted, but Mr. Yao rejected that

LaGuardia decision improper, arbitrator finds



Gene Yao waited 3 years for fair consideration of his application for promotion.

suggestion," the ruling stated. Meyer was re-elected as department chair on May 22, and Mellow denied Yao's promotion on June 12.

DECISION 'INFECTED'

Beyond questioning Mellow's credibility, Weinstock concluded that the president's decision was in violation of the contract. "The Arbitrator simply finds that the process was infected by improper considerations," she wrote. "President Mellow's judgment was tainted by her disagreement with the Chair of the CIS Department." The arbitrator also listed "a series of factual errors"

in the president's statement of reasons for denying Yao's promotion.

Weinstock's sharply worded ruling comes on the heels of two recent rebukes to the LaGuardia administration. The first was decided in court last February, when a judge ordered an arbitrator to award back pay to faculty in Cooperative Education.

The second came on July 1, when an arbitrator found that LaGuardia had violated the contract when it arbitrarily stopped paying counseling faculty for returning early from annual leave.

In Yao's case, the arbitrator ordered that his promotion be decided by a select faculty committee, instead of by Mellow.

The three cases reflect an overall lack of respect for faculty and for the union contract, PSC members at LaGuardia say. One LaGuardia professor told Clarion that three members of his department had filed grievances in the past year and a half. "People are being targeted and harassed unduly," he said, "and morale in the department has dwindled."

"There's an atmosphere of intimidation on campus, and many people find it demoralizing to work here," said Joan Greenbaum, chapter chair at LaGuardia and a professor in the CIS department. "But these union grievance victories show that, through the union, people can win fair treatment."

MORALE DIMINISHED

"These rulings raise real concerns about the administration of the college," said PSC First Vice President Steve London. The three successive losses ought to persuade the administration to change its approach to labor relations, he told Clarion. "The union will do whatever is necessary to see that people are treated fairly and with respect," London said, "but we would prefer to see President Mellow simply abide by her contractual obligations in the first place. To do otherwise is to breed conflict, sow resentment and lower morale."

English professor Danny Lynch, who serves as the chapter's grievance counselor, said he hopes the recent decisions encourage Mellow to adopt a "greater spirit of cooperation" in labor-management meetings and elsewhere.

"She should listen to us - we are equal partners under the contract," Lynch added. "The arbitrator gave weight to our arguments, and attention must be paid."

The arbitrator found the decision was 'tainted.'

LaGuardia backs off dress code

In April, management at LaGuardia Community College told employees in Enrollment Services that they would have to follow a dress code and get their supervisor's approval for office decorations.

These were among several new rules in a set of "protocols" that PSC members were told to sign. But members didn't stand for the unilateral move. HEO Abram Bolouvi sent a copy of the protocols to the union right away.

"I signed it because they wanted it immediately," he explained. "But

because I didn't think it was legal, I decided to call the union."

Bolouvi was right. Unilateral changes in conditions of employment violate the PSC contract and New York State labor law, explained PSC Legal Director Nathaniel Charny. "The law is beyond clear on this point," Charny said. "Dress codes must be bargained."

After the PSC objected to CUNY central administration, LaGuardia rescinded the protocols.

Unilateral changes violate the PSC-CUNY contract and the law.

Charny noted that member vigilance in alerting the PSC allowed the union to push for a quick resolution. "The only way we can protect these hard-won rights is if we know when those rights are being abrogated," he said. (To find the grievance counselor for your campus, see www.psc-cuny.org/rights.htm.)

"I feel great relief now," Bolouvi told Clarion. "Not everyone can afford to dress like management," he said, especially when CUNY hasn't offered union members real wage increases. "Everything has gone up but our salaries," he said. **-DR**

CALENDAR

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 9: 6:00 pm / Labor Goes to the Movies - 9 to 5 with Dolly Parton, Jane Fonda and Lili Tomlin. At 99 Hudson St., 6th Floor. Contact Dania Rajendra, 212-354-1252 or drajendra@pscmail.org, for more information.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 10: 11:45 am / Labor Day Parade. The PSC will assemble on West 45th St. between 5th and 6th Avenues. Look for red PSC banner and signs. Call Jim Perlstein at 212-354-1252 for more information.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 12: 6:00 pm / Meeting for faculty counselors with PSC negotiating team. At Hunter School of Social Work, 129 East 79th Street, 10th floor. RSVP to Amanda DeJesus Magalhaes, 212-354-1252 or adejesus@pscmail.org.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 21: 5:00 pm / PSC-CUNY Federal Credit Union hosts a free seminar, "Know Your Credit Score and What it Means." Registration is required; call 212-354-2238 x214 to sign up.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 24: National demonstration in Washington against the war in Iraq. The United for Peace & Justice protest has been endorsed by the PSC, which is organizing buses for members to attend. For cost and other info, contact Viney Maykut at lmakut@pscmail.org or 212-354-1252.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 29: 6:00 pm / PSC mass membership meeting. At Cooper Union's Great Hall, East 7th St. and Third Ave. in Manhattan. See page 7 for more information, or call 212-354-1252.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 7: 6:30 pm / College of Staten Island chapter shows *The Oil Factor* with discussion afterwards. Part of the *US and Globalization: Deconstructing the Iraq War* film series. At Green Dolphin Lounge Student Center at CSI.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 16: 9:00 am / UFT and American Cancer Society Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk. Begins at the 72nd Street band shell. Contact Rose Pignataro, 212-354-1252 or rpignataro@pscmail.org, to sign up.

Special chapter elections

In July, the PSC Delegate Assembly passed a resolution allowing for special elections for Grad Center officers and delegates and to fill vacancies at CUNY Central Office, Hunter College, and CCNY.

Petitions will be available on September 30, and must be returned by October 28. Ballots will then be mailed on November 18 and must be returned by December 9. The ballots will be counted on December 12. For more information, or to obtain a petition, contact Barbara Gabriel at the PSC office, 212-354-1252 or bgabriel@pscmail.org.

PSC endorsements in primary vote

By CLARION STAFF

Election is September 13

In June the PSC Delegate Assembly endorsed Norman Siegel for public advocate and several candidates for City Council in the September 13 primary.

Eileen Moran, co-chair of the union's Legislative Committee said, "We are only supporting candidates who have strong records in support of our members, CUNY and the labor movement."

PUBLIC ADVOCATE

"With the increase in attacks on free speech and academic freedom, including at CUNY, New Yorkers must have a strong public advocate who is unafraid to speak out," said Moran.

Norman Siegel is a graduate of Brooklyn College and "an avid fan of CUNY and its role in the city," added Moran. He is strong on PSC and CUNY issues. She also praised Siegel's "innovative ideas" for local advocacy networks across the City.

Siegel headed the New York Civil Liberties Union for more than 15 years. His consistent stands against the USA-PATRIOT Act and advocacy of New Yorkers' concerns after 9/11 have led to endorsements from progressive activists, firefighters, families of 9/11 victims and even fairly conservative Democratic clubs.

DISTRICT 2: MANHATTAN

Lower East Side

Rosie Mendez is a former tenant organizer and attorney at Brooklyn Legal Services. The PSC is one of



Norman Siegel advocates for the families of firefighters killed on 9/11.

many labor unions that endorsed Mendez, who has pledged to be "labor's advocate" if elected to the City Council. "Mendez is a grassroots organizer and the only serious candidate who did not move into the District to run for office," said Legislative Committee member Manny Ness.

DISTRICT 4: MANHATTAN

East Side

As a lawyer, **Jack Lester** has an extensive record of *pro bono* work and advocacy for tenants and community groups. A former member of his Community Board, Lester began

his career fighting for students' right to vote where they attend college; he is a strong supporter of academic freedom and critical of the Taylor Law.

DISTRICT 5: MANHATTAN

Upper East Side/Roosevelt Island

Chief of staff for Council Speaker Gifford Miller, **Jessica Lappin** is an active participant in several community groups in the district. "She understands and supports PSC issues, and has a sophisticated analysis of how the Council works and could be improved," said Moran.

DISTRICT 9: MANHATTAN

Harlem

Active with community groups helping prisoners and families struggling with AIDS, **Inez Dickens** oversees her family's real estate business, which has deep roots in Harlem. She warns that Harlem's current hot housing market is squeezing out long-time residents and businesses. A long-time Democratic Party activist, Dickens has been endorsed by Manhattan political leaders including David Dinkins, David Patterson and Charles Rangel.

DISTRICT 13: BRONX

Pelham, Morris Park, Throgs Neck

Jimmy Vacca, an adjunct faculty member in urban studies at Queens College, built a strong record as District Manager of his Community Board for 25 years, Legislative Committee members say. With Olga Mendez retiring, electing Vacca would replace a hostile, conservative councilwoman by a pro-CUNY, pro-PSC representative.

DISTRICT 38: BROOKLYN

Red Hook, Sunset Park

Eddie Rodriguez is a visiting faculty member at Seton Hall Law School's Center for Social Justice. "As an academic he understands issues of academic freedom, and will make education a priority," said Moran. Rodriguez worked in the office of Attorney General Eliot Spitzer, served as president of School Board 15, and was a member of the Central Labor Council's subcommittee on immigrant rights.

DISTRICT 25: QUEENS

Jackson Heights, East Elmhurst, Corona

Bryan Pu-Folkes, a graduate of Queens College, is the founder and executive director of New Immigrant Community Empowerment (NICE), which organizes new immigrants to be "active, informed, and influential" in civic affairs. A close race is expected in this primary, which pits Pu-Folkes against incumbent Helen Sears. "It's in the PSC's interest to support progressive insurgents," says Legislative Committee member Ron Hayduk, "particularly one who has a serious shot and a promising political future."

INCUMBENTS

Following is a list of Council incumbents endorsed by the PSC, most of whom do not face strong primary challenges:

BRONX: Oliver Koppell (Dist. 11); Larry Seabrook (Dist. 12); Helen Foster (Dist. 16)

BROOKLYN: Bill de Blasio (Dist. 39); Yvette Clark (Dist. 40); Kendall Stewart (Dist. 45); Lewis Fidler (Dist. 46)

MANHATTAN: Christine Quinn (Dist. 3); Gail Brewer (Dist. 6); Miguel Martinez (Dist. 10)

QUEENS: Tony Avella (Dist. 19); John Liu (Dist. 20); Hiram Monserrate (Dist. 21); David Weprin (Dist. 23); Jim Gennaro (Dist. 24); Melinda Katz (Dist. 29); Leroy Comrie (Dist. 27); James Sanders (Dist. 31); Joseph Addabbo (Dist. 32)

STATEN ISLAND: Michael McMahon (Dist. 49)

PSC holds anti-racist training workshop

By PETER HOGNESS

In June about 40 PSC activists – including Executive Council members, chapter leadership and staff – attended a two-day anti-racist training workshop. "It was a good first step," said PSC Secretary Cecelia McCall.

"We now have some common language and principles that should help us frame strategies for organizing at our local campuses and union-wide to increase the participation of members of color at both levels," said Samuel Farrell, chair of the PSC's Diversity Committee. "Our present charge is to take the discussions of undoing racism to the membership."

The June 6-7 meeting was led by trainers from the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond, which has conducted similar sessions with groups ranging from the Seattle school board and the University of New Mexico to unions and small community organizations. Their presentation focused on defining racism and analyzing the power relationships on which it is based; ex-

Education for leadership, staff

amining the different manifestations of racism in the US today and the history that produced them; and discussing what is required for effective anti-racist organizing.

RESEARCH NEEDED

In a follow-up discussion on June 29, participants talked about how the workshop had affected their work on campus or within the union.

"We had a meeting of the Contract Enforcement Committee that was looking at a group of disciplinary cases," said McCall. "Suddenly I realized that a majority of these members were people of color. We need to do some research to see whether this is an institutional pattern."

"I started looking around on my own campus," said Alexandra Tarasko, a professor of nursing and PSC grievance counselor at Queensborough. "When I opened up the textbooks, or looked at educational videos, it hit me that the images were mainly of white people." This

stands in stark contrast to CUNY's student body or New York's population, she observed, "and I'm starting to pay more attention."

"The workshop got me thinking about how people of color can help perpetuate the problem," said Executive Council member Iris DeLutro, "by not saying what we think, by making excuses for things instead of dealing with them."

A frequent criticism was that the sessions should have been structured to create more space for raising questions in small-group discussion. "Each segment would have been enriched if there had been more periods of that kind of discussion," said DeLutro. "I did feel that we really needed another day."

A related comment, also common, was that more time was needed to talk specifically about how racism affects CUNY and the PSC. "The question I was left with is, how do I apply this?" said CLT Chapter Chair Shelly

Mendlinger, who said the workshop had sparked a lot of discussion within his chapter's leadership.

One of the main gains of the workshop, several people said, was simply to open up the conversation on a topic that people often shy away from. "There are moments of discomfort any time you talk about

racism," observed DeLutro. "But that's OK – we still have to talk about it." Jonathan Buchsbaum, chapter chair at Queens College, said, "People certainly care about the issue, but we don't as a group deal with it very much. It's very important that people not be inhibited about discussing it."

And discussion, Buchsbaum and others agreed, is just a first step. "The people who participated in the workshop almost demanded a plan for follow-up," said Stanton Biddle, professor of library science at Baruch. "They said this workshop had to be a launching pad for future action." Biddle is also a member of the Diversity Committee, which

first proposed the workshop.

A steering committee to propose next steps was formed at the June 29 follow-up meeting; its members include Biddle, Buchsbaum, Farrell, McCall and PSC President Barbara Bowen, who was also a workshop participant.

"We need to acknowledge that both CUNY and the PSC have not done enough in recruiting, hiring, retaining and promoting people of color," said Farrell. "The leadership of both organizations does not reflect the diversity and experience of CUNY employees, students or the New York City population."

A NATIONAL ISSUE

Farrell pointed to a resolution on diversity passed at the recent AFL-CIO convention, which he said requires the AFL-CIO and its affiliates to develop plans to ensure that diversity is reflected in elected leadership and membership participation by 2009. "There is still a lot of work for our union to do to draw members of color to chapter meetings and leadership roles in the PSC," he said.

Common language to confront racism

After debate, AFL-CIO splits in two

By DANIA RAJENDRA

At its 50th anniversary convention, the AFL-CIO saw three of its largest affiliates quit the federation, citing differences over organizing strategy. The Service Employees International Union (SEIU), Teamsters, and United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) had made up more than one-third of the AFL-CIO's membership.

The split came after months of uncharacteristically open and sometimes rancorous discussion. SEIU President Andy Stern kicked off the debate after Bush's re-election, calling for dramatic changes in the AFL-CIO's structure that he said were needed to reverse the steep decline in US union membership.

ALL EYES ON PARADE

In the wake of the split, local labor leaders pledged to continue working together, despite the angry disagreements on the national level. New York City Central Labor Council President Brian McLaughlin said that the City's September 10 Labor Day Parade would include unions both in and out of the AFL-CIO. In fact, the chair of the parade, Stuart Appelbaum, represents a union that has left the federation.

"This will be the most important Labor Day parade in decades," said Appelbaum, who heads a UFCW af-

United Labor Day parade in NYC on Sept. 10

filiate, the retail union RWDSU. At a meeting in August, Appelbaum told union activists that all eyes – including those of politicians and employers – would be on the parade, watching to see if labor has been weakened by the split.

"We need to make a success of this Labor Day," agreed McLaughlin, and he urged union members to show their strength and unity in the streets. McLaughlin predicted that local activists will "continue to draw on friendships, alliances and relationships built over the years – no matter what jersey your team is wearing."

With more media attention on this year's parade, it offers an opportunity to let the public know about the PSC's contract fight, said Jim Perlstein, co-chair of the union's Solidarity Committee. "PSC members should come to show solidarity with our colleagues in our struggle for a just contract, with all of New York's working people and all of organized labor," he said. The PSC contingent for the September 10 parade meets at 11:45 am on 45th Street between 5th and 6th Avenues in Manhattan.

Outside New York, local leaders also stressed the need for unions to work together. "Our SEIU, Team-

sters and UFCW locals were part of the labor movement before the convention, and they're still our brothers and sisters now," said the head of the California State AFL-CIO. In Minnesota, the state federation president said that if he couldn't work with the disaffiliated unions with AFL-CIO's President

John Sweeney's blessing, "we'll have to do it underground."

That kind of sentiment led Sweeney to reverse his initial hardline stance, which had called for drumming disaffiliated unions out of local Central Labor Councils and state bodies. In early August the federation's Executive Committee moved to create "Solidarity Charters," to allow locals of disaffiliated unions to remain in CLCs and state structures. "It's not these locals' fault that their national unions left the AFL-CIO," Sweeney said, explaining why he changed his mind.

TEMPERS COOLING

Some labor organizations said even before the split that they would not expel non-AFL-CIO unions. For example, the International Labor Communications Association (of

which *Clarion* is a member) and Pride at Work, a national organization of lesbian and gay union members, announced they would be open to all.

Tempers seem to have cooled considerably since July, when AFL-CIO Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson included the dissident unions' Change to Win Coalition in a list of forces trying "to tear us apart," along with George W. Bush, Wal-Mart and the US Chamber of Commerce. But when the Change to Win unions meet in Cincinnati at the end of September to found a new national labor group, the anger and bitterness on display in July may resurface.

In the months leading up to the AFL-CIO convention in Chicago, the unions in Change to Win argued that US union membership would continue to decline unless the federation could require affiliates to spend much higher portions of their budgets on new organizing. SEIU President Stern also contended that building union power requires having just one union per industry sector, and he has called for forced mergers of smaller unions to achieve that goal.

AFL-CIO loyalists said that this proposed shift of resources to orga-

nizing went too far, and urged the federation's focus to remain on electoral politics. They resisted Stern's call for more centralized authority, which they said limited local autonomy and union democracy. Left-wing unionists such as José La Luz and Bill Fletcher maintained that the debate's focus on structure missed the point, and that only a bolder political vision could give US labor the strength and energy of unions in South Africa or Brazil. (See the roundtable discussion in the February *Clarion*, at www.psc-cuny.org/communications.htm.)

SOME IN, SOME OUT

The seven unions in the Change to Win coalition are SEIU, the Teamsters, UFCW, the Carpenters, UNITE HERE (garment and hotel workers), the Laborers, and the United Farm Workers. The Carpenters left the AFL-CIO in 2001, and the last three unions, at this point, remain in the federation.

The American Federation of Teachers, the PSC's national affiliate, remained in the AFL-CIO and expressed strong support for Sweeney's leadership. The United Auto Workers (which represents graduate assistants at NYU and Columbia) stayed in the federation, as did the Communications Workers, AFSCME (public workers) and the rest of the building trades.

Bring the troops home 'rapidly,' says AFL-CIO

By DAVID BACON

At its convention in July, the AFL-CIO passed a historic resolution demanding that US troops withdraw "rapidly" from Iraq. After the resolution was adopted, visiting Iraqi trade unionists called on US unions to bring their members out to national demonstrations against the war, set for September 24 in Washington, DC.

"My son has been called back to Iraq four times already, and he's on the list to go back," said Henry Nicholas, a hospital union leader in the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, as he urged approval of the call for a rapid pullout.

OCCUPATION, NOT LIBERATION

Brooks Sunkett, vice-president of the Communications Workers of America (CWA), told the convention that the government had lied to him when it sent him to war in Vietnam three decades ago. "We have to stop it from lying to a new generation now," he implored.

Watching from the visitors' gallery was a handful of Iraqi union leaders. One of them had been part of an Iraqi labor delegation that

Iraq protest in Washington Sept. 24

traveled to the US two months before to plead the case of Iraqi workers. For 16 days they traveled to more than 50 cities, often speaking before hundreds of angry workers, demanding an end to the occupation, and they called on US unionists to take action.

The Iraqis told American union members how American military authorities have banned labor organization in oil fields, factories and other Iraqi public enterprises. Meanwhile, Bush political operatives have been preparing to sell off those enterprises to foreign corporations, with a potential loss of thousands of jobs and the income needed to rebuild the country.

"This is not liberation. It is occupation," said Ghasib Hassan, a leader of the Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions, one of the unions that sent its members to speak in the US. "At the beginning of the 21st century, we thought we'd seen the end of colonies, but now we're entering a new era of colonization."

"We believed strongly that if unions in our country could hear their Iraqi brothers and sisters asking for the withdrawal of US troops,

they would respond in a spirit of solidarity and human sympathy," said Gene Bruskin, a national coordinator of US Labor Against the War (USLAW), which sponsored the tour. "We were right."

FLOOR FIGHT AVERTED

In the run-up to the AFL-CIO convention, resolutions calling for troop withdrawal poured in from unions, labor councils, and state labor federations across the country. But as the convention began, AFL-CIO national staff tried to substitute another resolution that called for ending the occupation "as soon as possible" – the same position put forward by the Bush administration.

Convention delegates who belong to the USLAW network responded by proposing a call for "rapid withdrawal" of the troops. At a strategy-planning session attended by over 150 delegates, US and Iraqi unionists joined together to plan a fight on the convention floor to win that language.

Before it could take place, however, CWA Vice-president Larry Cohen went to the AFL-CIO Executive Council, the federation's ruling body, and asked them to accept the



David Newby, president of the Wisconsin State AFL-CIO, called for "an end to the occupation in Iraq [and] the restoration of the right of Iraqi workers to organize."

change. Knowing that a fight was in store, and suddenly unsure of their ability to win it, the Council agreed.

WATERSHED

The resolution marks a watershed moment in modern US labor history, in several ways. It was the product of grassroots action at the bottom of the US labor movement, not a directive from top leaders. And, as USLAW observed, the reso-

lution "represents the first time in its 50-year history" that the AFL-CIO has opposed a US war.

Anti-war unions will be well represented at the massive anti-war protest in Washington on September 24. The PSC has endorsed the United For Peace & Justice effort, and will organize buses for members to attend. For cost and other info, contact Viney Maykut at 212-354-1252 or lmaykut@psemail.org.

HIGHER ED IN BRIEF

Diversity, or lack thereof, at Baruch

In a front-page story, the *Amsterdam News* questioned Baruch's commitment to diversity among the college's faculty and administration. *US News and World Report* named Baruch's student body "most diverse" – but the faculty and leadership don't measure up, the newspaper found.

A college spokesperson attributed that, in part, to a generation gap, saying, "20 or 30 years ago...there weren't as many minorities" in the Baruch student body – from which current faculty and leadership are often drawn. But Baruch professor Stanton Biddle checked the statistics. "It turns out that the student body was more diverse in 1974 and 1984 than it is today. The number of Asians is up now, but the number of blacks and Latinos is significantly down," he noted.

Prof wins tenure

University of California at Berkeley reversed a decision denying tenure to a biology professor who publicly criticized the university's relationship with biotech giant Syngenta (formerly Novartis).

Syngenta and UC Berkeley had a deal allowing the company to claim first rights to selling products based on faculty research.

The professor, Iganacio Chapela, told the *Chronicle of Higher Education* that the reversal came as a surprise.

The university's denial of Chapela's tenure provoked an angry outburst among academics. An outside committee found evidence of conflict of interest, and UC Berkeley's chancellor granted Chapela tenure in May.

Grad assistant updates

Last month, the California State University system settled a collective bargaining agreement with its approximately 6,000 graduate assistants, who are represented by the United Auto Workers (UAW). In their first contract, they won increases of 10.5% compounded over three years, basic health coverage, guaranteed vacation, and a grievance procedure.

But back in New York, NYU rescinded recognition of the graduate workers' union – the first union of graduate workers at a private university. Those workers, also organized in the UAW, plan to fight back. In June, the National Labor Relations Board decided that graduate assistants' right to organize at private universities is not protected under the law.

A rally was planned for August 31, and the *Sun* reported that NYU president John Sexton was "surprised" by the backlash he has encountered on campus since announcing that he would no longer negotiate with the union.

Key issues remain unresolved

By PETER HOGNESS

PSC representatives met repeatedly with management this summer, in formal contract bargaining as well as informal conversations. But as the fall term began, there was still a large gap between the two sides on fundamental questions.

"There are still key outstanding issues on the table," said Anne Friedman, PSC vice president for community colleges. "Management's proposal is something that the PSC simply cannot agree to, in terms of the monetary package and the Welfare Fund. Those numbers are just not acceptable."

SIMPLY UNACCEPTABLE

"We have worked hard to reach an agreement, and are still trying," said PSC President Barbara Bowen. "But so far we have not found a way to bridge the gap."

The problem, Bowen explained, is that management is demanding major concessions and its financial offer is too low to pay for both a real

CUNY's stance on contract shows little change

wage increase and the needs of the Welfare Fund.

Management's economic offer has not changed since the spring. It calls for no salary increase in the contract's first year, raises of 6.25% over the next three years, and an additional 1% wage hike in the fourth year if the PSC agrees to pay for it through a "productivity increase." The net effect would be that PSC members' pay would fall substantially behind inflation.

The union's proposal calls for pay increases of more than 10% plus an \$800 cash increase to base salary (pro-rated for part-timers), and another \$500 boost to base pay for longevity. Up to 1% in the fourth and final year would fund improvements in equity and working conditions, including progress toward fair pay for adjuncts.

The cost of Welfare Fund (WF)

benefits, especially prescription drug coverage, has been rising far faster than CUNY's contributions. (See also page 2.) In response to the union's insistence on increased funding for the WF, management amended its proposal during the spring to include a one-time payment of \$800 per member (pro-rated for part-timers) to the WF reserve, plus a \$200 per capita increase in CUNY's ongoing contributions. On the last day of the contract, the equivalent of a 1% pay hike would be applied to CUNY's WF contribution rate.

Management's proposal would temporarily help the Welfare Fund, but would not provide enough to restore the dental benefit and would leave the Fund in crisis within a few years.

In contrast, the PSC counterproposal provides for an increase in CUNY's ongoing WF contribution

rate at the start of the agreement, raising it by the equivalent of a 1.25% pay increase. Retroactive money from this increase would go into the WF reserve. The fourth year of the agreement would see CUNY's WF contribution rate increase to 0.75%, for a total of 2%.

CUNY MUST PAY

"Our proposal would give the fund financial security and significantly enhance the dental benefit," said PSC First Vice President Steve London.

The third major area of disagreement is CUNY management's continuing demand for major concessions from the PSC. Under management's proposal, annual leave for full-time faculty would end on August 22. Department chairs would be excluded from union membership, as would certain HEOs. Union negotiators have rejected these proposals.

The union's bargaining team met repeatedly over the summer to consider alternatives and try to find a way to move forward. In addition to formal contract negotiations on June 14 and 22, the two sides held several informal discussions to see if they could identify a path toward a fair settlement.

"After the PSC Delegate Assembly passed a resolution authorizing a job action referendum, management requested that we hold some informal discussions," Bowen told *Clarion*. "The result was several intense, informal conversations." These discussions had not led to any breakthroughs, she said. "But any time management has asked to talk with us, we have said 'yes.'"



The PSC Executive Council met late into the night on August 23, discussing contract strategy.

Clarion wins local, state, national awards

By CLARION STAFF

This summer *Clarion* was named the best union newspaper of its size by the International Labor Communications Association, the labor media group for unions in the US and Canada. This award for general excellence was one of several that *Clarion* earned for its work in the past year.

The ILCA also cited "Organizing the Research Foundation," by PSC Executive Council member Nancy Romer, as the best article on organizing published by any local union. Judges praised the article as "a creative, detailed, but very clear discussion of the complexities of subcontracting, outsourcing and part-timing of jobs in a 'shadow university' the employer has created outside the collective bargaining agreement." A September 2004 article by editor Peter Hogness, on the PSC's lobbying and electoral work,

"Best paper" of its size

was named as the best news story among papers in *Clarion's* circulation class.

NOT SO DENSE

The awards were presented at the ILCA's convention, held in Chicago in late July just prior to the convention of the AFL-CIO (see page 5). *Clarion* assistant editor Dania Rajendra was elected to a two-year term on the ILCA's national board; before she came to *Clarion* last fall, Rajendra worked as editor of the *Minneapolis Labor Review* and communications coordinator for Committee of Interns & Residents/SEIU.

Earlier in July, the American Federation of Teachers Communications Association (AFTCA) named a *Clarion* article as the best feature story published by any of the AFT's

largest local papers. The article profiled the first two CUNY students to die in Iraq, one of whom supported the war and one of whom opposed it. Judges praised the story for its moving but unsentimental presentation of the two young men's stories and their different views on the war.

Clarion took the AFTCA's second-place award for general excellence. Judges praised the paper for thorough and fair reporting; they also praised its design, though noting that it can be "somewhat dense" at times.

REPORTING LOSSES, TOO

In May, the Metro New York Labor Communications Council gave *Clarion* first place for general excellence in its circulation class. Like

the ILCA, the NYC labor press group chose *Clarion's* article on the PSC's growing political influence as best news story. "It is refreshing to see a discussion of this subject that includes losses as well as victories," the judges wrote. A *Clarion* photo by Gary Schoichet and Romer's article on organizing the Research Foundation also won first-place awards.

In April, New York State United Teachers (NYSUT) gave *Clarion* top honors in its circulation class for best feature story and best article on health issues. PSC President Barbara Bowen's column on "The Adjunct Problem" was named as best editorial, and a layout by *Clarion* designer Margarita Aguilar won for best front page. *Clarion* shared NYSUT's award for the "Best of the Best" among all member publications with NYU's Local 3882.

**Top honors
for writing,
design and
photography**

Mass membership meeting Sept. 29

By DANIA RAJENDRA

On state of negotiations, how to move forward

A mass membership meeting on September 29 is at the center of the PSC's mobilization for a fair contract at the start of the semester. Over the summer union leadership met to lay plans for a network of campus-based "picket captains," to strengthen links between members and prepare for future action.

At the mass meeting, union leadership will report on the latest developments in negotiations, and plans to pressure management past "the finish line that management envisions" – as reflected in their current offer – and to achieve "the finish line that the union envisions," said Mike Fabricant, PSC vice president for senior colleges and a member of the bargaining team. "The mass meeting will update membership about the contract and the substantial gulf that still separates management and union members."

POWER

"There's power in bringing everyone together, because we're going to have to win it together," said PSC Vice President for Community Colleges Anne Friedman. "Coming to the mass meeting is a way to show that you're not happy with what management is offering."

The meeting will be held at 6:00 pm on Thursday, September 29, in the Great Hall at Cooper Union, lo-



This demonstration in May 2004 was one tactic to pressure management. The mass meeting will discuss what else the union can do to win a settlement.

cated at East 7th Street and Third Avenue in Manhattan. (For more information, see www.psc-cuny.org or call 212-354-1252.)

For the vast majority of union members, Fabricant said, management's contract proposal is simply unacceptable. "What, then, is the alternative to rolling over and accepting management's demands for con-

cessions and its inadequate economic offer?" he said. "At the meeting, we'll discuss why a referendum on a job action could be a logical next step in intensifying the pressure to get the contract that members deserve."

The option of a referendum was put forward in a resolution passed by the PSC's Delegate Assembly on May 26. The resolution committed

the union to "make every effort" and "work throughout the summer" to settle the contract fairly. If no settlement was reached by September 1, it authorized the union's Executive Council "to determine whether and when to conduct a referendum, either by campus or union-wide, on the question of whether the PSC Executive Council should authorize a job action."

"The delegates agreed that we needed to find a way to up the ante, to shift the balance of power in our favor," said Friedman.

On September 29, PSC President Barbara Bowen, other members of the bargaining team and legal counsel will give the latest information on negotiations and provide answers to some of members' common questions. "Fundamentally, this is going to be a working meeting," Fabricant said.

New York State law bans public employees from collectively withholding their labor – but some public-sector unions have nevertheless conducted strikes or other job actions. The meeting will provide members with information on the law, and the experiences of other unions.

OUTREACH

While the mass meeting is at the center of the PSC's agenda for September, the union is also organizing on several other fronts.

A key element of the union's organizing plan is increased activity at the campus level. Meetings over the summer began to build a structure of local "captains" for one-on-one communication with members about the contract campaign (see sidebar). Community and student outreach plans are being developed as well.

Legislative action has been on a slow boil all summer. The Legislative Committee has done regular outreach to local, state and federal elected officials. PSC Secretary Cecelia

McCall told *Clarion* the union sent letters explaining CUNY's underfunding of the Welfare Fund benefits, and the contract struggle generally. Now the committee is phoning officials and candidates, especially those endorsed by the PSC, asking them to march in the union contingent in the Labor Day parade (see page 5) and take an active role.

There is power in bringing everyone together.

In the course of this outreach work, McCall added, the committee learned that when CUNY management has met with legislators, they have tried to blame the shortfall in the Welfare Fund "on whomever they can, including retirees and adjuncts" – on anything but the real cause, the failure of CUNY's contributions to keep up with rising health care costs.

CONCESSIONS

The two stubborn problems in contract negotiations, said Friedman, are management's continuing demand for concessions (such as ending annual leave for full-time faculty on August 22), and its refusal to offer enough money for both pay hikes and the needs of the Welfare Fund. "We could sign a contract tomorrow if we were willing to accept those terms," Friedman said. "But they're unacceptable to PSC members."

She urged members to attend the September 29 meeting to show their discontent with management's offer and be part of the discussion about what the union should do next.

Who should come on September 29? Anyone who cares about the contract, said Fabricant. "If you want a chance at a real salary increase, you'll go," he said. "If you want to stabilize and restore the Welfare Fund, you'll go. If you want to keep department chairs in the union, you'll go. If you care about equity, you'll go."

Chapters gear up for fall campaign

This summer saw an unusual level of activity in PSC chapters, as activists prepared for increased campus organizing this Fall semester. "This is new," said Bob Cermele, union chapter chair at City Tech. "Our chapter exec never met during the summer before." At the same time, Cermele said, "We've really just begun the work that's needed."

A cornerstone of the union's fall organizing plan is developing a structure of campus-based representatives responsible for communicating with a specific group of members. These "captains" will be responsible for getting the union's news about negotiations to those members, and conveying members' thoughts about the campaign to the union leadership. Several chapters spent time this summer "mapping" their campuses – drawing up plans that link each union member to a local captain.

MAPS & CAPTAINS

York Chapter Chair Janice Cline wrote to several members on her campus in August, inviting them to volunteer. "Our organizing goal is to reach every PSC member and speak to them one by one," she wrote. Captains will be asked to attend a one-hour training session, talk with each of the members for

whom they're responsible, and encourage members to attend the September 29 mass meeting and contract activities on campus.

"Essentially what we need to do is take the pulse of the rank and file," said William Ashton, an assistant professor in psychology at York. Ashton said he signed up to be a captain because "unless we fight for what we want in the contract, we're not going to get anything."

TAKE THE PULSE

"When people ask, 'what's going on with the contract?' it's a good opening to talk about the organizing we're doing," noted City Tech chapter chair Bob Cermele. "Our chapter executive committee met back in July. Those present all volunteered to be picket captains, and chose 30 members to be in touch with." When the semester begins, Cermele said, they will recruit more captains and get the rest of the campus covered.

In some chapters, local campus meetings will help build for the mass meeting on September 29. "We're planning a general membership meeting on September 14," Jay Appleman, chapter chair at Queensborough, told *Clarion*. "Usually it's not that early in the semester."

At BMCC, "When the Fall semester begins, a two-page *Gadfly* [the



City Tech Chapter Chair Bob Cermele

BMCC chapter newsletter] about the contract will be in everybody's mailbox," says chapter chair Jane Young. Chapter activists also plan to meet with student government leaders, she added.

Shelly Mendlinger, chair of the College Lab Technicians chapter, said his chapter has started working through its existing network of department representatives. They are the initial captains, and are recruiting others.

For the CLT chapter, as for others, the focus is on the September 29 mass meeting. "Come to the meeting so your voice will be heard," Mendlinger said. "It's the best way to stand up and be counted, and to find out the latest information directly from the leadership." – DR

A guide to TIAA-CREF at CUNY

By PETER HOGNESS

A detailed guide to CUNY's rules for the TIAA-CREF retirement plan is now available at www.psc-cuny.org/benefits.htm. The PSC Retirees Chapter's oversaw TIAA-CREF Issues Committee production of the guide.

"Until now there was no booklet that dealt specifically with the CUNY version of TIAA-CREF," said Irwin Yellowitz, chair of the Retirees Chapter. "We wanted to have everything about the CUNY version of the plan in one place, so that people would not have to consult four or five different sources."

KNOW THE RULES

"It's very important for active employees as well as retirees," said Susan Karp Manning, chair of the chapter's TIAA-CREF Issues Committee, "perhaps even more so." It's important to be aware of how decisions make while on the active payroll will affect you in retirement, Manning said. "It's important to be aware of the rules, and many people are not," she said. "TIAA-CREF has become more complex – and what you don't know can hurt you."

Because of that complexity, the guide took more than two years to produce," Yellowitz said. "It took a long time because of the complexity of the task, and to ensure that it was both accurate and comprehensive," he explained. "It was a tremendous project, and took a lot of work."

The actual writing of the guide was done by TIAA-CREF staff, especially Rosemary Markowski. "At first, one of our members had the idea to write the brochure himself," said Manning. "But we soon realized this wasn't possible – it had to be done by TIAA-CREF."

ITERATIONS

"It was a long process," said Howard Reznikoff, who coordinated much of the Retiree Chapter's work on the document. "Rosemary and I, together with some others, drafted an outline of what should be in it," Reznikoff recalled. "It went through many iterations. And every time you made a change, it had to go through TIAA Compliance [staff], and that took forever."

"After more than two years, it's finally available," Yellowitz said. The guide is available only on the internet. Yellowitz explained that the Retirees Chapter opted for distribution over the web so that it would be easier to update the document as CUNY's rules or the TIAA-CREF plan itself went through changes.

The text of the guide has not yet been updated to reflect the recent change in CUNY's "one-third rule" (see article at right), but the change is described in a note on the PSC website that is linked to the CUNY/TIAA-CREF guide.

CUNY drops one-third rule for TIAA-CREF

By CLARISSA GILBERT WEISS
PSC Director of Pension & Welfare Benefits

On June 27, the Board of Trustees approved several changes to CUNY's Optional Retirement Program that had long been advocated by the PSC. Over 65% of the full-time instructional staff at CUNY participate in the Optional Retirement Program (ORP), which includes TIAA-CREF, Guardian or MetLife.

"The union had pressed hard for this change at the bargaining table, and we're glad to win it through another route," said PSC President Barbara Bowen.

Many of the recent changes have been PSC contract demands for over a decade. The most important is that CUNY will no longer require participants to leave one-third of their pension accumulations in the TIAA-CREF system after they retire. As of September 1, 2005, the University has reduced the required amount to \$50,000 – which for most members is far less than the onerous requirement of one-third. While the PSC believes that this amount is still too high, the new rule is a major improvement.

MAJOR IMPROVEMENT

A little history is in order to explain what has transpired and why. Prior to 1990, TIAA-CREF did not allow any monies to be withdrawn from any of its accounts, except for a modest 10% of accumulation. This was changed through federal legislation and, as a result, the CUNY Board of Trustees passed resolutions allowing for the transfer of CREF monies to either MetLife or the Guardian plans, and at retirement to other funds chosen by the retiree.

The complicating factor was after-retirement health insurance. While the basic health benefits provided to full-time employees through the City of New York do not require any premium, most of CUNY's full-time instructional staff make optional payments to receive additional benefits. For active employees, the cost of this "high-option rider" is covered through regular payroll deductions. Retirees can continue to pay for the high-option rider through payments from their monthly pension check.

INFURIATINGLY ILLOGICAL

However, not all participants in TIAA-CREF or other ORP plans choose to purchase an annuity, so many of them do not receive a regular monthly check. CUNY requires that these retirees keep enough money in the TIAA-CREF system to guarantee their payments for the high-option rider. Even those retirees in TIAA-CREF who have no optional insurance coverage must, as a matter of City policy, be collecting some kind of annuity in order to qualify for even the basic post-retirement health insurance.

When withdrawals of funds out of TIAA-CREF were first allowed in

PSC wins major pension victory



1990, the CUNY Board of Trustees voted that one-third of an employee's pension portfolio (not including any SRA funds) would have to be

YOUR BENEFITS

kept within TIAA-CREF to guarantee the health benefits. The Trustees cited their consultations with TIAA-CREF and the newness of this entire process, but the union objected to the one-third requirement as unfair and unnecessary.

The current cost to retirees for family coverage under GHI's high-option rider is \$12 per month. For retirees who also purchase optional coverage for long-term care or catastrophe insurance, the cost is significantly higher. But the amount at stake is never anywhere near one-third of retirement funds – which, for long-serving CUNY employees in TIAA-CREF, can be hundreds of thousands of dollars.

The gap between these two figures – the amount required to remain within TIAA-CREF and the amount actually needed to guarantee health insurance payments – was particularly aggravating because members in TIAA-CREF had their noses rubbed in the discrepancy as they approached retirement. Prior to retirement, each member must sit

down with the counselors from TIAA/CREF to calculate how much money will be needed on a monthly basis to pay for any optional benefits, and how much money TIAA/CREF would therefore need to annuitize in order to guarantee those future payments. Since most retirees need to annuitize relatively small amounts of money to insure these optional payments, they were often infuriated by the illogical one-third rule.

In testimony to the CUNY Board of Trustees, PSC President Barbara Bowen described the number of members "who are bewildered and angry at the CUNY regulation that requires participants in the ORP to retain 33% of their retirement accounts with TIAA-CREF." Bowen told the Trustees that "the restrictions on the use of TIAA-CREF, which are exclusive to CUNY and do not apply, for instance, at SUNY, feel like one more insult added on top of salaries whose real-dollar value is declining every day we don't get a raise."

UNJUSTIFIABLY HIGH

After many years of pressing for an end to the one-third rule, the union welcomed the change to a flat \$50,000. The PSC contends that this amount is still unjustifiably high, however, and won a commitment from the University to revis-

it the pension provisions within three years and modify them if warranted.

The Trustees approved several other changes to the Optional Retirement Program at their June 27 meeting. Individuals who wish to transfer their monies out of the TIAA plan to an independent account such as Guardian or MetLife can make a direct transfer without first having to purchase CREF units and then making the transfer. This eliminates an unnecessary and burdensome step, which had also delayed the transfer.

TERMINAL ILLNESS

In addition, active employees who are not retired but who are certified as terminally ill are now entitled to draw on their TIAA-CREF, Guardian or MetLife funds prior to retirement or death. Employees who need to pay extraordinary bills as a result of their illness will now be able to tap into a ready source of funds without having to retire first. Employees who are in the NYC Teachers Retirement System had legislation enacted two years ago that accomplishes the same thing.

Full-time employees who leave CUNY and later work in another institution which has TIAA-CREF and who continue to be eligible for health benefits from CUNY when they retire will follow CUNY rules, i.e. keeping \$50,000 in TIAA-CREF, for the monies that CUNY put in to the pension plan. This will ensure that when employees begin collecting their TIAA-CREF pensions, the City-provided after-retirement health benefits will continue as well. Before employees start to collect their pensions, they should contact the personnel office of the college they were employed with in order to file the appropriate forms for the resumption of their health benefits.

HELP FOR ADJUNCTS

Finally, as reported in the Summer *Clarion*, as of last July 1, members of the NYC Teachers Retirement System who are purchasing prior service may use the monies in their Supplemental Retirement Accounts with either TIAA-CREF or HRC Financial Service as a rollover for this purchase. This provision will be particularly helpful to adjuncts, whose only pension option currently is TRS and who may wish to purchase prior service.

In her testimony before the Board of Trustees, Bowen also pressed management to extend to part-time instructional staff the right to join the ORP. Citing "the tenuous nature of adjunct employment at CUNY," Bowen said that having this option would "improve the opportunity for adjuncts to vest and count on a modicum of after-employment income stability."

Further information on all of these changes can be obtained either from the personnel offices at the colleges or at the PSC Department of Pension & Welfare Fund Benefits.

Choosing your pension

A permanent decision

By ELLEN BALLEISEN
PSC Pension Counselor

Pensions probably don't top the list of concerns for most newly hired CUNY faculty and staff. Yet new full-time CUNY employees must choose between two radically different pension plans within 30 calendar days of their first day on the CUNY payroll. The decision is irrevocable, and making a wise choice requires careful consideration of several factors.

If you started this semester and already chose, you can change – but only during your first 30 days on CUNY's payroll.

Your basic choice is between a defined-benefit plan and a defined-contribution plan. CUNY's defined-benefit plan is provided by the New York City Teachers' Retirement System, a municipal government agency. The defined-contribution plan is known as the Optional Retirement Program and includes three providers: TIAA-CREF, a national financial services company, and MetLife and Guardian.

Below is some information to help new full-timers make the decision. (Pension information for part-time CUNY employees is at www.psc-cuny.org/communications.htm, on page 9 of the February 2004 *Clarion*.)

THE BASICS: TRS

The NYC Teachers' Retirement System (TRS) guarantees retirees a fixed monthly pension payment for

life, with small, periodic cost-of-living adjustments. There are no fluctuations based on investment returns. Retirement allowances are calculated using formulas based on years of service and highest annual earnings.

A TRS pension is funded by both employee and employer contributions, but the employer contribution is much larger. However, an employee participating in TRS does not see CUNY's contribution in a separate account in his or her own name. Instead, CUNY makes lump-sum payments to TRS based on actuarial calculations made for all CUNY employees with TRS pensions.

CUNY employees in TRS contribute 3% of their gross salary to TRS for 10 years. These contributions are not federally taxed. After 10 years, employees are no longer required to make contributions.

THE BASICS: ORP

In the Optional Retirement Program (ORP), there is a retirement account in the employee's name that is funded by both employer and employee contributions. Employees contribute 3% of their gross pay for the entire time that they work at CUNY and do not pay federal taxes on this money. At the same time, CUNY makes contributions equal to 8% of gross pay during the first seven years that an employee is at the university; from the eighth year on, this contribution is increased to 10%.

The employee decides how money in this retirement account is invest-

ed. Investment choices include stock, bond, fixed-rate and real estate funds managed by TIAA-CREF. The Optional Retirement Program may also include investments in MetLife or Guardian funds. A retirement account may be invested in several different funds, and employees may periodically change their allocations among different accounts.

An ORP pension is funded by the amount of money in the individual employee's account. There is no way to predict how much the account will be worth at retirement because investment values change constantly.

VESTING

What does vesting mean? When you are vested, even if you do not wish to begin receiving a retirement allowance immediately, or are not yet eligible to receive a retirement allowance, the contributions made by you and your employer remain in your account regardless of where your future employment takes you. TRS-participants are vested once they have five years of TRS credited service. ORP participants are vested after they have worked at CUNY for 366 days; vesting is immediate for those who come to CUNY with an open-vested TIAA-CREF retirement account from a previous employer. Employees who leave CUNY before meeting the vesting requirements will get back their own contributions to their retire-



Ken Orvidas

ment account and any interest that has accrued to the account.

RETIREMENT AGE AND HEALTH INSURANCE IN RETIREMENT

TRS participants become eligible to retire with an unreduced pension once they are 62 years old. They may also retire with an unreduced pension if they are 55 years old and have at least 30 years of credited service. TRS members between 55 and 61 who do not have 30 years of service can retire with a reduced pension. All TRS participants who are receiving a pension and who have at least 10 years of service credit can keep both their City of New York health insurance and the benefits provided through the PSC/CUNY Welfare Fund.

ORP participants may retire at any age but can only maintain their health benefits if they have 15 years of continuous service at CUNY. These health benefits take effect only when the retiree is 62 or older.

PRIOR NEW YORK CITY AND STATE SERVICE

TRS participants can get pension credit for any work done for the City or State of New York before they became full-time CUNY employees. ORP participants cannot.

PORTABILITY/INHERITANCE

ORP participants in TIAA-CREF can continue their TIAA-CREF accounts if they leave CUNY for another employer that provides TIAA-CREF pensions. TRS pensions can be transferred to other New York City and State retirement systems but cannot be transferred to private or out-of-state employers.

ORP participants can leave the entire balance of their accounts to their families after they die. TRS participants can designate one beneficiary who will receive a lifetime annuity after they die.

MAKING THE CHOICE

So which plan is better for you? Age is one key factor in the decision.

The history of ORP investments suggests that over a 25-year period, the value of a pension in the ORP is likely to exceed the value of a TRS pension. This consideration may be especially important for new employees in their 20s and 30s. Older starting employees may give greater weight to the fact that TRS participants can keep their health insurance in retirement after just 10 years on the job.

Prior work history is another factor. A new full-timer with many years of adjunct service or other work for a New York City or State agency can get TRS pension credit for this work. A new full-timer who already has an open-vested TIAA-CREF retirement account from another institution can vest immediately.

ORP and TRS pensions also differ in some ways regarding loans and disability payments. Your campus Human Resources office has a brochure that explains these details.

DEADLINE: FIRST 30 DAYS

You can contact the PSC (212-354-1252) if you would like to discuss your decision with a pension advisor.

New full-time CUNY employees who have already made a choice but now want to change it can do so within their first 30 days on payroll. See your college's human resources office for more information.

Medicare Part D: buyer beware!

By LARRY MORGAN

The senior prescription drug program created last year, Medicare Part D, is a very flawed benefit. It means big profits for drug companies, but gives only limited help to Medicare recipients – who must pay to enroll in the program.

If you are a CUNY retiree with Medco drug coverage through the PSC/CUNY Welfare Fund (WF), you already have a far better drug plan – and the WF trustees strongly recommend that you *not* enroll in Medicare Part D.

PRIVATE PROVIDERS BENEFIT

Because private providers stand to make a lot of money from Part D, we can predict that they will use a variety of tactics to “sell” retirees on signing up with their plan. These companies will warn that if you delay enrollment, the cost of a future premium goes up by 1% per month. However, this increase doesn't apply to anyone who has equivalent or better drug insurance when the Medicare drug plan starts – and the PSC/CUNY Wel-

Avoid predatory private providers

fare Fund drug benefit meets this criterion.

That's not just an opinion; it's been determined by independent actuaries. The WF will inform all qual-

YOUR BENEFITS

ifying members with a “Notice of Creditability” this fall. This generally won't matter to retired CUNY full-timers, since they have drug coverage and won't need Medicare Part D later on. But future access and cost can be very important to others – for example, the surviving spouse of a CUNY retiree who is currently covered under the Welfare Fund's Medco plan. When a CUNY retiree dies, the surviving spouse will still be able to sign up for Medicare's prescription drug plan at the lowest rate at that time, since the spouse was covered by an equivalent or better plan when Medicare Part D began.

That's why the Welfare Fund will be requesting assistance from mem-

bers to identify their *spouses who are Medicare covered or eligible*. The federal Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services requires that we identify each person under the program by Social Security number and date of birth. We already have this information for CUNY retirees, but in order to protect your spouse it will be critical that the Fund have his or her SSN and birth date as well.

If you are a retiree with WF prescription drug insurance, we recommend that you *not* enroll in Medicare Part D. Ignore the sales pitches and the scare tactics; you already have better drug coverage. And help us gather the most comprehensive list to protect our entire membership.

Note: Part-timers at CUNY, even if they have earned a pension, have no CUNY health care coverage in retirement. Even for them, the decision on Medicare Part D is not clear-cut, and the next issue of Clarion will look at the factors that CUNY part-timers should consider.

Alert new colleagues

Newly hired full-time faculty and staff must make a final choice of pension plan during their first 30 days on payroll. But new hires do not receive *Clarion* until after their first few pay periods – so please show this article to your new colleagues right away.

ACADEMIC FREEDOM

The mis-named "Academic Bill of Rights"

By STEVE LEBERSTEIN

Chair, PSC Academic Freedom Committee

Over the past several years the climate for university faculty has become more dangerous than it has been in 50 years. Teachers and researchers have come under intense if unpredictable scrutiny, and their speech and writing – both in the classroom and outside it – has been subject to vilification if it offends particular groups.

Their actual or purported views may be attacked – on websites such as CampusWatch.org; in the tabloid press, such as the New York *Post's* dishonest reports on the October 2001 teach-in at City College, or the New York *Sun's* targeting of two Brooklyn College professors in May; or in raucous public demonstrations, such as those confronting Hamilton College trustees after the school hired Susan Rosenberg to teach a course on prison writing. The latter dispute led the president of John Jay College to ban Rosenberg from ever teaching there again.

Those unlucky enough to come into the crosshairs of the guardians of orthodoxy can pay a high price for the privilege of speaking their minds in the classroom and elsewhere. While there have not yet been wholesale firings on the basis of political tests, public attacks have led to administrative investigations and sanctions against Ward Churchill at the University of Colorado, interference in the faculty election of Timothy Shortell as a department chair at Brooklyn College, cancellation of student-sponsored speaking engagements for Michael Moore, and constant threats to the untenured and contingent. Under such a regime, the prudent watch their backs and start to censor themselves.

INCREASED HOSTILITY

Today's climate of increased hostility to dissent has its roots in national politics, with President Bush's strident challenge that in the war on terrorism, "You're either for us or against us." In this Manichaean view of good and evil, critics of Bush's policies fall into the latter category.

But the current assault on academic freedom comes mainly from private groups rather than the state. The Boston-based David Project, for example, produced a "documentary," shown privately, on Columbia University's Middle Eastern Languages and Culture Program, accusing it of bias and intimidation. After September 11, it was the American Council of Trustees and Alumni that published a list of faculty members it accused of disloyalty because they questioned US policy in the Middle East.

Now David Horowitz and his Center for the Study of Popular Culture in California want to get government in on the act. To remedy what he portrays as the domination of colleges by radical faculty, Horowitz has proposed a so-called "Academic Bill of Rights" (ABOR) as a model for state and federal legislation. Bills modeled on the ABOR have been introduced into state legislatures; they aim to regulate faculty personnel decisions and curricula, supposedly to mandate inclusion of diverse opinions in the presentation of every potentially controversial subject.

How this would be applied to such topics as slavery, the Holocaust, or evolution is not specified in the legisla-



Jur Guiteau

tion. Would business professors have to discuss the view that charging interest on loans is a sin? Such questions are left up to the future judgment of legislators and, perhaps, the courts.

Appropriating some of the rhetoric of the 1940 AAUP Statement on Academic Freedom, ABOR supporters claim that professors can't be trusted to carry out their duties as academics free of external control. ABOR would curb academics' autonomy in research, teaching, educational policy and faculty hiring, substituting "political correctness" for professional judgment. By proposing to police classrooms, department personnel committees and faculty councils, ABOR actually perverts the very idea of academic freedom. Its central goal is the imposition of outside political controls on the academy.

Citing an unpublished study, Horowitz has argued that faculties at many colleges are no longer capable of professional discipline on the grounds that they include many more registered Democrats than Republicans. The so-called study was limited to humanities and social science departments, mostly at elite colleges. Business school faculties go unexamined, as does the assumption that party registration is relevant to professional competence.

CARD-CARRYING

In Ohio the sponsor of the ABOR bill introduced in the State Senate, Larry Mumper, told the Columbus Dispatch that he believed that "80% or so of [professors] are Democrats, liberals or socialists or card-carrying Communists" who corrupt "young minds that haven't had a chance to form their own opinions." His belief in this regard, he said, was based mainly on a single complaint he had heard of a student who claimed she had suffered discrimination as a

Bush supporter. When asked if he had ever met a Communist, Mumper explained that the term was a euphemism for "people who want to over-regulate and try to bring in a lot of issues we don't agree with." He further stated that "we're going to put in some ways to monitor classrooms" to enforce the bill.

RAPP-COUDERT REDUX

To date, similar bills have been introduced in 15 state legislatures, including in the New York State Assembly (A-4389). So far, none has become law, although the Pennsylvania House of Representatives did pass a resolution creating a special committee to investigate how public colleges in the state hire and promote faculty, and whether students are fairly evaluated. Hearings will begin early in the fall, and could turn out to be a 21st-Century version of New York's notorious Rapp-Coudert Committee – an investigating committee of the state legislature whose hearings sparked the dismissal of about 50 teachers and staff at City College in the 1940s.

Horowitz's ABOR project was apparently born in New York. The Chronicle of Higher Education reports that Horowitz came up with the idea in "a December 2002 meeting with some fellow Republicans in New York": Edgar Egan, chair of the SUNY Board of Trustees; SUNY Trustee Candace de Russy; and Peter Salins, SUNY's provost. "I was among sort of friends," Horowitz told the Chronicle. "It allowed me to think aloud."

At the federal level, legislation patterned on a similar version of the Academic Bill of Rights is now closer to becoming law. In a bill to reauthorize the Higher Education Act, the House Committee on Education and the Workforce approved on a party-line vote some ABOR-style language as a "Sense of Congress." For example, it would mandate that institutions of higher education offer

their students "diverse approaches and dissenting sources and viewpoints," and that speakers and programs "promote intellectual pluralism and include diverse viewpoints."

While the language in the House bill isn't as damaging as when originally introduced, and "the sense of Congress" language means that its guidelines are not statutory, the bill could lead to the kind of Congressional investigations of the McCarthy era.

SPOTLIGHT ON ADMINISTRATION

Mark Cohen, chair of the Pennsylvania House Democratic caucus, said that Horowitz "is interested in using the existence of offended students as a club [against] faculty who are not radical right-wingers [to compel] silence or acquiescence in Republican hegemony." Cohen added, "It is a sad day in America when professors have to defend themselves from attack for critical social commentary by pointing out they are registered Republicans."

As Cohen's comment suggests, Horowitz and company do not actually need to get ABOR bills adopted into law in order to have a chilling effect on free expression in the university. If the effort to pass the bill produces noisy hearings and a media pressure campaign, that may be enough to create an atmosphere of self-censorship.

This puts a spotlight on the role of university administrators. Will they stand up against these efforts at intimidation, and defend academic freedom as an essential social good? Or will they run for cover, leaving professors to fend for themselves? As recent events at CUNY have shown, we cannot take it for granted that provosts, presidents and chancellors will defend academic freedom when the faculty is attacked.

Our right to practice our profession as teachers and scholars is threatened as it hasn't been for a couple of generations. The mounting attacks from the right constrict the range of political discourse in the US. The stakes in this battle are high, and they reach beyond the walls of the university: American democracy would be seriously diminished by curbs on academic freedom.

DEMOCRACY DIMINISHED

Unfortunately, Horowitz's ABOR campaign is just one part of a broader trend. Some other threats to academic freedom are much closer to becoming law, like the move to create a politically appointed oversight board for federally funded international studies centers.

Other threats are already part of the federal code, like the USA-PATRIOT Act. In addition to its provision for government access to library and bookstore records without warrants, the PATRIOT Act imposes dangerous – and less well-known – restrictions on the free exchange of ideas, the exchange of academic personnel and the publication of research, especially in the sciences.

More academics see the crisis as a real one and are organizing to mount a defense. For example, a "Working Group on the Academic Crisis" – including members of the AAUP, Educators Against the War, United University Professions, the PSC and others – has been formed to document the current crisis and to build a collective defense network for those who are threatened.

Now is the time to speak out in defense of academic freedom. If we don't, we'll soon be mourning its passing.

An obituary for academic freedom? Not yet.

MASS MEETING

Sept. 29 – come to the Great Hall

By **BARBARA BOWEN**
PSC President

The last time the PSC held a mass meeting to discuss how to beat a regressive contract regime was 1972. It is time for such a meeting again.

Before I explain why the September 29 meeting at Cooper Union's Great Hall is so important, I want to bring you up to date on the contract negotiations and the union's preparations for action. I know there are questions on everyone's minds: what happened on the contract during the summer, are we any closer to a settlement, is the union planning a strike?

As this issue of *Clarion* goes to press, the proposals of the union and management remain unchanged from our last negotiating session on June 22. Chancellor Goldstein continues to offer 6.25% over four years on salary (plus an additional 1% funded by "productivity increases"), continued underfunding of the Welfare Fund, and deep concessions such as the removal of department chairs from the union. The PSC continues to reject a contract paid for by concessions and "increased productivity"; we call for salary increases above 10%, funding to restore Welfare Fund benefits, and improvements in working conditions.

Other City contracts remain similarly stalled. The United Federation of Teachers, as of this writing, does not have a settlement, nor do the unions representing firefighters, police lieutenants, sergeants and detectives, sanitation workers, corrections officers and others. The one development of the summer is double-edged: the Patrolmen's Benevolent Association received an arbitration award for a two-year contract at 5% per year. In making the award, the arbitrators cited specifically the lack of competitiveness of police salaries and the City's huge \$3.5 billion budget surplus. The City was forced to go significantly beyond the salary framework it proposed.

DOUBLE-EDGED

But the raises came at a price: more than half of the money for the increase will be generated by drastic cuts in the pay of new recruits and other "productivity increases." Each new recruit will experience a loss of about \$48,000 over his or her early career. The viciously anti-labor framework of the City's current regime stays in place: no raises for public employees without concessions on salary or benefits or time.

When working people across the country are being forced to give up their pensions and health benefits just to keep their jobs, such a policy in New York may be able to pass itself off as "common sense." But I

think it needs to be said that the City's current labor policy is far from sensible – it's outrageous. Despite the blandness with which Mayor Bloomberg typically expresses it, the idea that in a time of surplus, workers have to make concessions just to stay even with inflation, is far-right extremism. It should not go unchallenged.

The PSC's strong stand against this concessionary policy has not been unnoticed. The most important development of the summer for us was management's realization that the union is serious about rejecting an austerity contract. Soon after the PSC Delegate Assembly passed the resolution authorizing the union to hold a referendum on job action, management indicated that they would be willing to engage in informal discussions to see if we could make progress toward an acceptable settlement.

Together with the negotiating team, I have been working on those discussions throughout the summer, exploring whether there is any way to reach an agreement that meets our needs on salary, Welfare Fund benefits and working conditions without having to consider a strike or other job action.

FIRM REJECTION

I hope the discussions bear fruit, and I will report to you as soon as possible if there is any progress. But it is important to remember that even this much responsiveness on management's part occurred only after we as a union demonstrated that we were firm in our rejection of a contract that would leave us worse off than before.

The negotiating team is pursuing every avenue we can to get a fair contract – working closely with other city unions as well as engaging in discussion with management – but the only thing we can count on is our collective power as the people who make CUNY work.

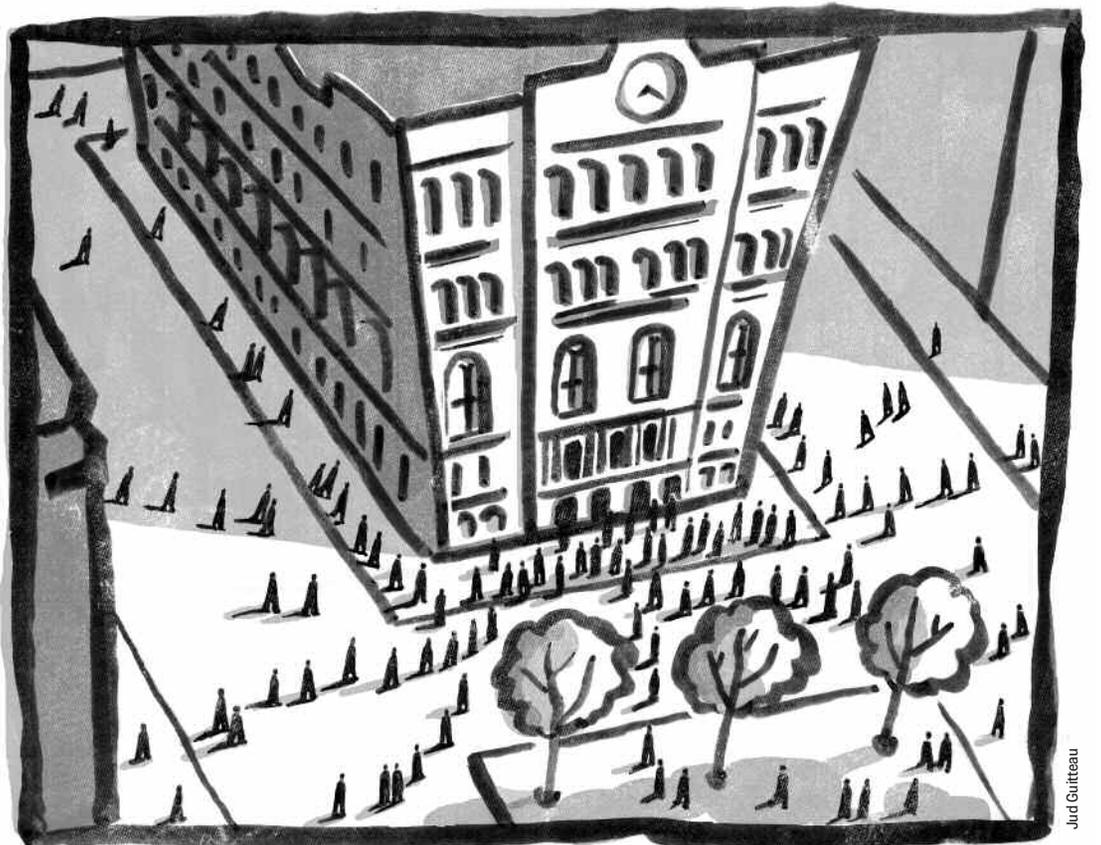
The Delegate Assembly resolution authorizing a referendum on job action committed the PSC to becoming the kind of union that is prepared – if necessary – to conduct a strike. Activists across the University have been mobilized by the resolution, and scores of faculty and staff have already signed on as organizers or picket captains for their campuses. A steering committee has been meeting weekly throughout the summer,

laying the groundwork the union would need if we were to take action: members have been building support among students, politicians, community groups and other unions, while putting in place the necessary financial and legal support.

I am writing now to ask you to take seriously the possibility that you will be asked to vote on whether the PSC should engage in a collective withholding of our labor. The best way to prepare for your decision in such a vote is to come to the mass meeting on September 29.

And by your presence in large numbers you will signal to CUNY management that you are not content to accept a substandard contract. Do not underestimate the message we will send simply by amassing in significant numbers and demonstrating by our presence that we are engaged in this fight. Whatever your view now of the union's next best move, coming to the mass meeting is a way to signal that you do not accept management's sub-par offer.

This isn't a standoff about a few dollars in your paycheck; it's a battle about whether



Juro Guiteau

Say 'no' to a contract that devalues our work

The idea of a job action is new terrain for us as a union, at least since 1972. The most powerful – and potentially transformative – thing we can do, it also involves sacrifice and risk. All of that has to be frankly discussed if we are to move forward together. The mass meeting is a key event in that process. There you will hear directly from the negotiating team about any further developments at the bargaining table and about the differences between our position and management's. You will get answers to your questions about the legal and political consequences of job action. Most important, you'll hear how we as a union plan to win a contract worth fighting for.

New York is going to pay for public higher education. In 1972, the top full professor and HEO salary was worth \$147,000 in current dollars. Now the top salary is \$93,507 – a drop of 36.4% in real terms. Other CUNY salaries have declined in value even more. Those figures tell a story of refusal to invest in the people entrusted with public higher education at a time when higher education is virtually a prerequisite for a decent life.

FIGHT FOR OUR FUTURE

The same story is told by the shift of costs of tuition onto our students – among the poorest college students in the country. Or by the starvation of our libraries and labs. Or by the blighting of prospects for ambitious young scholars, who come to CUNY full of hope and then leave after a few years because of the appalling lack of research support.

What New York wants is higher education on the cheap; the City and State want to be able to boast about the renaissance at CUNY, but they don't want to pay for it.

Accepting a contract that devalues the work we do means accepting a future of continued disinvestment. As people who have dedicated our lives to the rigorous, thrilling work of higher education, I think we have too much at stake to watch our future shrink without a fight. If you agree, or even if you want to figure out where you stand, don't miss the union meeting on September 29.

Clarion SEPTEMBER 2005

Newspaper of the Professional Staff Congress/City University of New York, collective bargaining representative of the CUNY instructional staff. Vol. 34, No. 7. PSC/CUNY is affiliated with the American Association of University Professors, the American Federation of Teachers (Local 2334), AFL-CIO, the New York City Central Labor Council and New York State United Teachers. Published by PSC/CUNY, 25 West 43rd Street, New York, NY 10036. Telephone: (212) 354-1252. Web site: www.psc-cuny.org. E-mail: phogness@psccmail.org. All opinions expressed in these pages are not necessarily those of the PSC.

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PSC people: Charles Molesworth

Modern poetry and grievance policy

Charles Molesworth is a professor of English at Queens College. He earned a BA from the University of St. Thomas, in Houston, Texas, and a PhD in English from SUNY Buffalo in 1968. He came to Queens College in 1967, and has taught there ever since.

Molesworth served as department chair for nine years and is the author of several books, including two volumes of poetry and works on Marianne Moore, Gary Snyder and Donald Barthelme. He is also active in the PSC, and currently serves as chair of the union's Grievance Policy Committee. He lives with his wife Carol in Forest Hills, Queens; the two celebrated their 40th anniversary in July. Molesworth spoke with Dania Rajendra.

What first drew you to CUNY?

Everyone I went to graduate school with applied to CUNY's senior colleges. They were thought as of good-paying jobs, and very rigorous – that is, you had to publish or perish. Of all the public universities in the country, the City University was seen as one of the most desirable.

What do you teach?

Mostly literary theory and modern poetry. Literary theory is very philosophical and I've always been interested in philosophy, so I gravitated toward theory because of that. And modern poetry has interested me since I was an undergraduate, reading T.S. Eliot and Marianne Moore.

In your research, what are you working on now?

I'm currently writing a biography of Alain Locke, an African American philosopher, critic, and one of the founders of the Harlem Renaissance. His archives are very large – 200 boxes of material – and they're at Howard University in Washington, DC. I got a PSC/CUNY research grant to go and study the archive in June. This January, I'll be a fellow at the American Academy in Berlin, and I'll be using the fellowship to complete my book. It's being published by the University of Chicago.

I say this not to blow my own horn, but to let people know you can *both* do union work and do scholarly research. That is really important.

Just to dilate on that for a moment....One of the real advantages that we have in the academy is being able to pursue several different important interests at the same time, in the same career. You can have a life in the public arena, and you can also maintain your scholarly interests and your family. It's quite possible – in fact, it's more than possible.



Queens College English professor Charles Molesworth is writing a book about Harlem Renaissance philosopher Alain Locke. In between handling grievances, teaching, and serving a six-month fellowship at the American Academy in Berlin, he finds time to enjoy wine, be-bop, tennis and modern art.

What do you like best about teaching at Queens?

I like the students a lot. I used to be chair of the department, so I would conduct searches. And everybody who came as a job candidate was impressed by the diversity of the students. I think some of us inside CUNY take that for granted. It really is a very special experience to teach a class made up of people from such different backgrounds.

What do you like least?

I dislike college presidents who could do good with very little effort, but fail to do so. Because they're so distracted by a need to raise funds, and often lack a real interest in faculty research, most college presidents are drags on the system. Make sure you don't say 'dregs on the system.' [laughs] Somewhere between a drag and a dreg, they're pretty, pretty – uh, unhelpful, let's say.

Did you come in 1967 expecting to be a union activist?

No, there was no union then! It was this

group called the Legislative Conference that had no teeth at all. It was a tea party. [laughs] Then we voted, formed a union and got a contract. For years, I wasn't involved.

How did your involvement develop?

I'm in the same department as [PSC President] Barbara Bowen. When she became the chapter chair at Queens, which was about seven years ago, she asked me to be the grievance counselor, and I said yes. So I learned how to do grievances.

It is exciting, because you get to investigate cases, present arguments, and interpret the contract. By the time a member feels he or she has a grievance, they're usually very stressed out. And so you have to do a lot of close listening to people. Then you have to turn their story into a legal argument.

It's very involving work. If you like it, you like it a lot. It's one of those kinds of jobs – either you swim with it, or you have to get out of the pool.

I went from just handling grievances at Queens, to working as a grievance coun-

selor at the Central Office several weeks every summer and one day a week in the regular academic year. Partly as a result of all of that, [PSC Director of Contract Administration] Debra Bergen asked me to be the chair of the Grievance Policy Committee.

What does the Grievance Policy Committee do?

About a dozen members – HEOs, CLTs and faculty members – discuss all the grievances that come before us, and decide whether or not to take them to arbitration.

We have to be careful not to take weak cases, because if we lose an arbitration, that weakens the contract. If we win, of course, that strengthens the contract, and we've had some important victories.

What's your take on the current fight for a fair contract?

Academic unionism is not built on the industrial worker or the service worker model. We're sort of this Third Way, if you will.

Barbara Bowen's argument is that the skills we have as academics are to a large extent built on the notion of research. So one of our strengths as a union is our ability to use research. We can make arguments based on historical data, economic data, sociological data, and bring all of that together into a coherent vision.

We're using academic skills to improve the academic world that we live in – making solid, data-based arguments to improve the nature of the University.

Besides your scholarship and union work, what keeps you busy?

I play tennis. I'm still trying to play as well as [Queens College professor] Jonathan Buchsbaum, who beats me all the time. I listen to jazz.

I am a great lover of wine. My son works for *Wine Spectator* magazine; he's a senior editor. I traveled with him to the Rhône Valley to taste wine in the cellars of a dozen different vineyards – which was probably the most pleasant thing I've done lately. I'm very, very big on wine. We drink a bottle of wine every day.

And also – this is sort of a hobby, but it's related to my work – I write art criticism. I publish in a magazine named *Salmagundi*. And my daughter is a curator in contemporary art.

So in a sense, both of my hobbies are related to my children. The two of them are in fact far beyond me in terms of skill and knowledge, but I do share their interests in wine and in contemporary art. It is great fun.

Combining union work and scholarship

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15-MINUTE ACTIVIST

Pass it on

Be sure to show new colleagues your copy of *Clarion* – they won't yet be on *Clarion's* subscription list. Since they must make a permanent choice of pension system in their first 30 days on payroll, they should see the article on p. 9.

Clarion can also be found on the PSC website (www.psc-cuny.org). While you're chatting, invite new co-workers to the mass meeting at 6:00 pm on September 29 at Cooper Union's Great Hall, East 7th St. and 3rd Ave. in Manhattan.