Historic Governors Island will soon be home to a new CUNY campus. The former Coast Guard base has classrooms, housing, sports facilities and a national monument. But there are more questions than answers about the island's future use. And plans to move public high schools into existing CUNY space in exchange for CUNY's new island space are moving forward. Some CUNY faculty and staff are concerned that they're not being consulted about the implications of opening up to 15 new high schools.
The PSC staged a boycott of the Graduate Center Cafeteria May 2-3 to show solidarity with restaurant workers who face abusive management and the lack of a contract. The GC food service franchise is run by Restaurant Associates, Inc., whose 800 unionized employees in the metro area have been working without a contract since February. On April 20, workers at the Graduate Center Cafeteria joined fellow members of HERE Local 100 in voting overwhelmingly to authorize job actions up to and including a strike.

The PSC boycott resulted in the Graduate Center Cafeteria taking in only $1,800 over the two days, compared to a normal day of $4,000-$5,000, according to restaurant workers.

One of the cafeteria workers, Jesus Garcia, lives in Queens with his wife and five kids. In twelve years at the Grad Center, Jesus has worked his way from dishwasher to busboy to salad maker to line worker to pizza maker to party caterer. Name the task and he can do it. Yet he ears just 89.75 an hour after twelve years on the job. So to make ends meet, after Jesus puts in his five days at the Grad Center, he works weekends at a Times Square eatery. But Times Square redevelopment recently closed that place, so now he’s looking for a new second job. “Vacations?” he says. “Yeah, once in a while we take a blanket to the park.”

Restaurant Associates has threatened Local 100 members with loss of health benefits if it doesn’t get its way in negotiations, and the union has filed unfair labor practice claims against Restaurant Associates with the city labor board for harassment, intimidation and illegal firing of workers.

Restaurant Associates operates food services all over the New York area at: U.S. Trust, Goldman Sachs, the Metropolitan Opera, Rockefeller Center and the Museum of Natural History. They run Au Bon Pain at JFK and they hold NYC’s Krispy Kreme franchise. RA has a record of fighting hard against union representation for its workers.

At the bargaining table in New York, Restaurant Associates has taken a hard line. It has threatened to cut off employee health benefits in the absence of an agreement, and for raises has offered nothing in the first year and ten cents an hour each of the next two. Their health and pension offers are similarly inadequate, according to the union. Faced with an antagonistic employer, HERE sees the unionization of all Restaurant Associates shops in the city as the key to securing a decent contract for its overwhelmingly immigrant workforce. And so a central contract demand is “card check neutrality.”

Card check neutrality means that the employer agrees to recognize the union and enter collective bargaining once a majority of the workers at a particular shop sign cards asking to join the union. This process, which is standard in Canada, is an alternative to requesting a government-supervised election. Under current US labor law, management has learned how to drag out the election process long enough to fire key activists and organizers, and intimidate the rest of the workforce through threats, illegal tactics are punished by mild fines, and can be cheaper than paying a decent wage. As Local 100 President Bill Granfield puts it, “In the workplace, real democracy means the freedom to participate in the union. Card check neutrality means management respect for worker choices without intimidation or harassment.”

Local 100 currently represents 800 Restaurant Associates employees, roughly one-third of its workforce in the metro NYC area, and has organizing campaigns underway at shops employing an additional 280. Members at the Graduate Center say they support card check neutrality as a key noneconomic demand, viewing it as crucial to the long-term viability of their union.
A new chapter for Governors Island

From casinos to CUNY

By TOMIO GERON

After years of debate over its future, Governors Island is now slated to become a unique CUNY campus.

With Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Governor George Pataki at his side, President George W. Bush announced on April 1 that he would transfer the island to City and State control.

Bloomberg and Pataki said they wanted to move existing CUNY programs to the island and use the vacated CUNY space for NYC’s overcrowded public schools. University officials suggested that the island could be used as a center either for teacher education or for science and math.

Leaders of the PSC and the United Federation of Teachers cautiously applauded the unexpected move, which could add as many as 15 new high schools. “What’s great about this initiative is that it locates higher education, physically and symbolically, as a gateway to New York,” said PSC President Barbara Bowen. “The map of the city has been redrawn. But if the plan is going to work, it will have to include substantial new funding and real participation by faculty and staff.”

The PSC and others have pressed for details on how the City, with a $900 million capital budget for the island into an established fact as quickly as possible. Bloomberg is moving to turn CUNY’s claim to Governors Island into an established fact as quickly as possible. When Pataki stepped off a Coast Guard boat onto the island on April 2, Chancellor Matthew Goldstein greeted him with the words, “Welcome to CUNY, Governor.” Bloomberg and Pataki representatives, which will create a long-needed academic plan for CUNY on the island.

The historic island was named Nutten (Nut) Island by the Dutch when they landed there in 1623, before buying it from Native Americans. The southeast two-thirds of today’s island did not exist at the time: most of the island’s land is landfill. In 1985, Governors Island became the site of the first trash incinerator in the US. As a Coast Guard facility, the island was the last of the EPA regulations, and the PSC is seeking health and safety inspections of the grounds before any CUNY operations begin.

Three new high schools slated for CUNY

In April, CUNY central administration suddenly announced plans to start three new public high schools on CUNY campuses. In May, the Board of Education announced that the three schools would use the same entrance exams as Stuyvesant, Bronx Science and Brooklyn Technical High Schools.

This September, inaugural ninth-grade classes of about 125 students each are scheduled at York, Lehman and City Colleges. A new ninth-grade class will start each of the next three years until full four-year schools exist.

The announcements prompted heated reactions from PSC members, who say there was no consultation and that the initiative is being rushed through without real planning.

Especially if CUNY is contemplating more high schools, the University should not start these schools without consulting faculty and staff,” said PSC President Barbara Bowen. “Having high schools on campus materially affects our working conditions; there is no excuse for this complete disregard for the faculty and staff. We’ve seen high schools work spectacularly at CUNY. But if they don’t have the enthusiasm of faculty and staff, they won’t work.”

Lack of Communication

At the April University Faculty Senate meeting, Chancellor Matthew Goldstein announced that since high schools teach standard curriculum in the first year, faculty involvement is not needed in curricular until a later date. “I don’t think the business of faculty consultation at this particular point is really that critical,” he said.

PSC leaders and chairpersons met with Chancellor Goldstein on April 10 to discuss union concerns – security, library and computer access, maintenance and, most importantly, space – about the new schools. Goldstein said that CUNY had been planning these schools even before the news about CUNY’s role on Governors Island (see main story); he later told the press that the plans were sped up after the Governors Island announcement.

The Chancellor also argued that the approximately 125 students per campus would be manageable. Goldstein acknowledged a lack of communication on the issue and agreed to the formation of task forces, including faculty and staff, to participate in local planning. PSC representatives responded that the 125 students per campus scheduled for this Fall would eventually become four times as many, and that no planning has been done to ensure adequate spaces or appropriate campus facilities.

Faculty and staff at York feel “outraged” and “betrayed” by President Charles C. Kidd, Sr.’s actions on the new school, said York PSC executive committee member Jack Schlein. In an April 17 letter to Goldstein, Kidd wrote that “York faculty and staff stand ready to collaborate” on the high school – even though York faculty and staff were not aware of the plan.

TRAILER HIGH SCHOOL

“In principle, we’re not opposed to a high school. It just has to be planned and done carefully,” said Schlein. “We feel disregarded in that we were not consulted.”

At Lehman College, the process appears to be off to a better start. Though planning is still in the early stages, the President and the VP for Administration at Lehman did notify the PSC about the high school plan, said Chapter Vice-Chair Manfred Philip. Faculty and staff at City College were initially told about the three campuses to be notified, having heard of it only through the April 10 meeting with Goldstein. Larry Hanley, PSC chapter chair at CCNY, disputes the Chancellor’s claim that there is space at City. He cites CUNY’s plan to put the new students in the temporary trailers erected for classes displaced from BMCC after 9/11, four blocks from the main campus, as evidence that City does not have room for the new students.

“I think putting a high school on campus would be a good thing,” Hanley said. “But the way it’s being implemented is not conducive to good results.”
BoT pick slammed as anti-gay

No background in higher ed

Rev. John Bonnici's nomination to the CUNY Board of Trustees was confirmed by the State Senate on April 16, despite strong opposition. The PSC and other critics cited his lack of academic and fiscal education, and his organizing against both gay rights and the reproductive rights of women. Bonnici is director of the New York Catholic Archdiocese's Family Life/Respect Life Office.

In his Senate confirmation hearing, Bonnici showed his lack of knowledge of CUNY, said Steve London, PSC First Vice President. "To rebuild CUNY, we need to work in partnership with Trustees who understand the academic and fiscal issues facing CUNY, and who celebrate CUNY's diversity."

State Senator Thomas Duane, Liz Krueger and Toby Stavisky joined CUNY faculty and staff in opposing Bonnici at a press conference at the Graduate Center on April 14. "I am opposed to [Bonnici's nomination] because it has been his job to argue against, lobby against and fight against reproductive rights and lesbian, gay, transgender rights," said Duane. City Council members Christine Quinn and 12 other members of the Council also opposed the nomination, writing a joint letter to Governor George Pataki that urged him to withdraw it. "This is not a time for condemnation," he told the Westchester Journal News. "Our message is pastoral in tone...In no way will this organization be inflammatory or divisive or politically motivated."

Duane called Bonnici's Westchester actions an "attack" on gay rights, saying that Bonnici "inserted himself on a political issue. If he's willing to do that in Westchester, he'd do that in New York City."

Clarion tried to reach Bonnici for comment, but his office responded that he is not talking to reporters.

PSC members expressed concern that Bonnici could play a significant role in the BoT's approval of new faculies, as well as tenure cases. "We will be able to put his bigotry aside when considering, for example, the tenure of a young scholar working in the field of Queer Theory?" asked Alisa Solomon, executive director of CLAGS.

Bonnici's outspoken opposition to abortion rights sparked concern that he might try to reshuffle CUNY's student health services, as well as the University curriculum on reproductive health.

"As a clinician," said Ilene Tannenbaum, director of the Brooklyn College Health Clinic, "I worry about the potential for sanctions against providers of reproductive health services for students."

Bonnici will fill the seat vacated by Father Michael Crimmins. Bonnici's critics generally praised Crimmins' record on the BoT. The problem with Bonnici, they said, was not his Catholicism, but his lack of experience in higher education combined with his record of organizing for an anti-gay political agenda. Many characterized the nomination as an effort by Governor Pataki to please conservative voters at a time when Pataki has reached out to some unions and to Latino voters. The Bonnici nomination was strongly supported by Cardinal Edward Egan.

"TOTALY UNAWARE"

Sen. Stavisky said Bonnici had failed to allay concerns about his lack of qualifications during his confirmation hearing. "He's not familiar with CUNY," said Stavisky. "CUNY faces serious budget constraints; TAP is being denied to students. He's totally unaware of what's going on."
Class size at CUNY: how many is too many?

By KRISTIN LAWLER

What would you guess is the largest class at CUNY? A class taught by one person? You might be surprised. Eighty students? One hundred? Try 275, in an introductory anthropology class taught by a single adjunct at Hunter.

Another contender is an introductory astronomy class with an enrollment of 533, taught by an adjunct with only a few undergraduate professors.

While these cases are relatively unusual, they are not unique. A preliminary investigation by Clarion also found a class of 305 at Baruch, and several classes enrolling 275. And there were repeated examples of one teacher responsible for a class of 150-200 students.

In Hunter’s Anthropology 101, one adjunct teaches a class of 275 students, without a grader, without discussion sections – and without any additional compensation. The official policy at Hunter, according to Acting Provost Ann Cohen, is to credit faculty for teaching two courses in a class where enrollment rises above 90 students – but only if the faculty are full-time. Hunter’s guidelines provide no extra compensation for adjuncts who teach these “jumbo” classes, even though in Anthropology they teach half of them.

Policy regarding jumbos varies widely from campus to campus, division to division, and often among departments as well. At Hunter, the largest introductory psychology course registers 275 students, but the department provides one grader to assist the adjunct who teaches it. Adjunct Thane Doss successfully lobbied Hunter’s Astronomy Department to pay him for two classes when he taught a jumbo class, plus provide $980 to pay for undergraduate assistants.

But Doss got the extra pay only after his Intro to Astronomy course enrolled the jaw-dropping figure of 533 students – and in the end he still felt ripped off. “The money went purely towards assistance in proctoring the exams,” Doss said. “Pay for two courses is not enough when you’re talking about these numbers of students.”

“Anything over 55 students is just not educationally sound.”

Rallies at City Hall amid budget endgame

TAP may be restored

By CLARION STAFF

As the endgame began in state budget negotiations, Governor George Pataki was giving ground on his plan for cuts to the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP). But as Clarion went to press, it was unclear whether he would back off from his proposal for yet another year of flat funding for CUNY, in what would be a continuation of last year’s “bare bones” budget.

While the state budget is late for the 18th year in a row, Pataki and the legislature are likely to finalize it much earlier this year than in recent years, due to the pressures of the fall election. Early this year, Pataki called for deferring one-third of each student’s TAP award until he or she graduates. The governor defended the idea as a “performance” incentive, and said students would have to bridge the gap through federal loans. But Pataki has backed down from his proposal. All TAP funds are now slated to be restored, according to legislative sources.

PLAYING GAMES

PSC Secretary Cecelia McCall applauded the likely restoration of the TAP cuts, which would affect 71,000 CUNY students annually, 72% of whom are racial or ethnic minorities. But she says she is still incensed that faculty and students had to fight to restore it. “It’s time for the Governor to stop playing games with TAP,” said McCall.

“That’s no way to treat students.”

In April and earlier this month, the PSC pressed state legislators to reverse the decline in State support for CUNY, as well as to reject the cuts to TAP. The union mobilized members to call their legislators and circulate petitions in support of increased funding for new full-time faculty positions and base aid for community colleges.

Meanwhile, students, faculty and politicians took to the streets in support of CUNY. On April 5, about one hundred people marched from BMCC to City Hall for a press conference against the CUNY cuts.

When PSC President Barbara Bowen spoke, she called Pataki’s scheme for TAP “a reverse student loan,” in which needy students would be required to give money to the government.

CUNY FOR ALL

Charles Barron, City Council Higher Education Committee Chair and CUNY graduate, helped lead the BMCC march. “CUNY has been a path to the American dream,” he said. “If the Governor takes away tuition assistance, then he is no friend of any New Yorker.”

In another protest, on April 30, hundreds of high school and college students were joined by CUNY faculty and staff in a march from Union Square to City Hall, to protest cuts to CUNY and the Board of Ed.

“I’m out here fighting for students’ rights to go to school,” said Missy Turner, a Brooklyn College student. “Some students just don’t financially have as much as others. TAP and SEEK help out students who are underprivileged.”

Organized by the CUNY for All Coalition, the march was capped off by a rally at City Hall where speakers, including PSC Treasurer John Hyland, rallied the crowd. Protesters’ chants included, “Cuts to CUNY, no way! Tax the rich, make them pay!”

The protesters also demanded that Albany pass legislation that would allow undocumented immigrating students to pay CUNY’s in-state tuition rate. Last fall CUNY announced that it would charge undocumented students the higher out-of-state rate, no matter how long they have lived in New York. In late April, Pataki announced his support for the bill.

Policy on “jumbo” classes varies widely

In a section, has one grader – and gets credit for just two courses.

“If a ‘typical’ CUNY class has 30 students, these large sections are essentially 8 or 9 classes in one,” commented Eric Marshall, PSC Vice President for Part-time Affairs. No matter how you look at it, said Marshall, “compensation for even two courses is not nearly enough.”

Like policies on compensation, the prevalence of jumbos also varies among departments as well. At Brooklyn College, the “vast majority” of jumbos are full-time. Hunter’s guidelines provide no extra compensation for adjuncts who teach these “jumbo” classes, plus provide $960 to pay for undergraduate assistants.

But Doss relied on computer-generated graded tests, but also gave – and graded – five written quizzes. “I know I must be nuts,” he said. “But some things students need to know can’t be asked by a computer.”

8 OR 9 CLASSES IN ONE

Full-time faculty often teach huge intro courses as well. At Brooklyn College, the “vast majority” of jumbos have full-timers at the helm. There, full-timers are credited for one course when he taught a jumbo class, plus provide $980 to pay for undergraduate assistants.

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Grievances

Grievance Counselor Howard Prince points to Article 15.1(b) of the current contract, which states that teaching employees “shall not be required to… assume an excessive student load.” Although this language is general, it’s not without some teeth. In the 70’s, the PSC won when faculty at Bronx CC grieved a 20% increase in class sizes; an arbitrator agreed that this was excessive, relative to past practice.

There are a variety of arguments that can be used to show that a given class size is “excessive” – comparison with past practice is one, unequal treatment in compensation policies would be another. In many cases, Prince says, the grievance procedure could help force a change.

“We should grieve excessive loads for part-timers, and for full-timers, too,” Prince said. “We know how many is too many.”
PSC finances and union power

By JOHN HYLAND
PSC Treasurer

A n organization’s budget is both a financial and a political document. The formulation of a budget involves calculations of income and expenses and decisions about the allocation of resources in relation to the goals of the organization.

The PSC aims to be a democratic and powerful defender of and advocate for the economic, political, and cultural interests of its members. In the vision of the elected leadership, democracy and power are integrally related. The PSC, like any labor union, will be as strong as the leaders and members who work together to make their collective action.

Our financial resources are instruments for making the union strong. The base of our financial resources is the members’ dues. Since the union contract benefits everyone in the bargaining unit, whether or not they have signed up as union members, New York State law allows an “agency fee” to be collected from non-members (an amount equal to dues), to cover the costs of representation.

TRANSPARENCY

Under the PSC Constitution, responsibility for supervising the financial resources is assigned to the Treasurer and the Finance Committee of the Executive Council (EC). The members of the Finance Committee are: Robert Cermele (NYCTC), James Cohen (JJ), Marilyn Neimark (Baruch), Linda Mele (NYCTC), James Cohen (JJ), and powerful defender of and advocate for the economic, political, and cultural interests of its members. In the vision of the elected leadership, democracy and power are integrally related. The PSC, like any labor union, will be as strong as the leaders and members who work together to make their collective action.

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PSC income and expenses have both increased from last year, reflecting increased membership and new activity in the union.

**Simplified**

Reorganizing the line items of the budget into clearer categories is part of an effort to make PSC finances more democratic, said Finance Committee chair Marilyn Neimark, a professor of accounting at Baruch. “Our goal is to make the budget more transparent and understandable,” said Neimark. “The first step is to start organizing it in a way that reflects the union’s programmatic activities—what the PSC actually does.”

Some examples of this approach include new line items that cover health and safety work, or local chapter activity. Reimbursements of dues paid to the PSC’s statewide affiliate, New York State United Teachers (NYSTA), are now broken out separately to provide a clearer picture of this relationship. But this is a work in progress, said Neimark, and next year’s budget will have further changes.

The budget reflects the PSC’s movement “to tell better what we are spending money on, and to better understand what is reimbursed,” Executive Director John Hyland told the DA. Some of the main new or changed items include:

- Increased resources for legislative and lobbying activity, to advance the PSC’s presence in Albany and City Hall.
- Chapter budgets, to encourage chapters to plan and carry out more locally based education and action.
- Improved communication with members through Clarion, including an award-winning redesign that has made the paper more attractive and reader-friendly.
- Continued resources for organizing new members.
- Committee budgets, to support member activity on issues such as diversity, women’s concerns, and solidary action on other unions at home and abroad.
- Continued support for legal advice and action, including recent actions before the Public Employment Relations Board.
- Increased resources for public relations work, to build public understanding and support for PSC and CUNY issues.
- Continued support for cultural programs—such as the successful film series “Labor Goes to the Movies”—to build a union culture within our own membership, and strengthen relationships with other unions and community allies.
- At DA meetings in December and January, delegates asked questions about the proposed union budget, discussed the points that were raised, and then voted to approve it.

Several of the questions involved the costs and benefits of the dues paid to the PSC’s affiliates—NYSTA, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), and the American Association of University Professors (AAUP).

**DUES NEGOTIATIONS**

Hyland responded that the PSC is in ongoing negotiations with NYSTA and the AFT over dues and rebates, and said the PSC’s 2002 budget was based on relatively conservative assumptions about the results. PSC President Barbara Bowen noted that the PSC works actively within those affiliates, helping to shape their policies. She also re-emphasized the important backing AFT and NYSTA provide to the PSC, especially in legislative and organizing work.

By PETER HOGNESS

**What’s in the PSC budget**

New format shows where the money goes

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Some examples of this approach include new line items that cover health and safety work, or local chapter activity. Reimbursements of dues paid to the PSC’s statewide affiliate, New York State United Teachers (NYSTA), are now broken out separately to provide a clearer picture of this relationship. But this is a work in progress, said Neimark, and next year’s budget will have further changes.

The budget reflects the PSC’s movement “to tell better what we are spending money on, and to better understand what is reimbursed,” Executive Director John Hyland told the DA. Some of the main new or changed items include:

- Increased resources for legislative and lobbying activity, to advance the PSC’s presence in Albany and City Hall.
- Chapter budgets, to encourage chapters to plan and carry out more locally based education and action.
- Improved communication with members through Clarion, including an award-winning redesign that has made the paper more attractive and reader-friendly.
- Continued resources for organizing new members.
- Committee budgets, to support member activity on issues such as diversity, women’s concerns, and solidary action on other unions at home and abroad.
- Continued support for legal advice and action, including recent actions before the Public Employment Relations Board.
- Increased resources for public relations work, to build public understanding and support for PSC and CUNY issues.
- Continued support for cultural programs—such as the successful film series “Labor Goes to the Movies”—to build a union culture within our own membership, and strengthen relationships with other unions and community allies.
- At DA meetings in December and January, delegates asked questions about the proposed union budget, discussed the points that were raised, and then voted to approve it.

Several of the questions involved the costs and benefits of the dues paid to the PSC’s affiliates—NYSTA, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the American Association of University Professors (AAUP).

**DUES NEGOTIATIONS**

Hyland responded that the PSC is in ongoing negotiations with NYSTA and the AFT over dues and rebates, and said the PSC’s 2002 budget was based on relatively conservative assumptions about the results. PSC President Barbara Bowen noted that the PSC works actively within those affiliates, helping to shape their policies. She also re-emphasized the important backing AFT and NYSTA provide to the PSC, especially in legislative and organizing work.

By PETER HOGNESS

**What’s in the PSC budget**

New format shows where the money goes

In an effort to make the PSC’s finances more open and transparent, this year the union’s Finance Committee has organized the PSC budget in a new way. After extensive review and discussion, the Executive Council and Delegate Assembly gave final approval to the FY 2002 budget at the start of the Spring semester.

PSC income and expenses have both increased from last year, reflecting increased membership and new activity in the union.

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In April, PSC members at fourteen chapters elected their local leadership for the next three years. Seven now have new chairs, but only one race was contested.

In that election, at Bronx Community College, a New Causus slate narrowly defeated candidates running on the Independent slate. For most chapters, ballots were counted on April 23 by staff at the PSC central office. In the BCC contest, the votes were counted by the American Arbitration Association.

At Bronx Community College, Marianne Pita of the New Causus edged out Kathleen Williams of the Independent slate for chapter chair by a vote of 83-80. James Ryan, who had won many past BCC elections as head of the Unity Causus slate, is retiring from CUNY this year.

**STRONG CHAPTER**

“We want to promote the widest possible participation of members,” said Pita. “There’s a lot of work to be done. People are enthusiastic about building a stronger chapter, with solidarity between faculty in different departments, between full-time and part-time, between faculty and staff.”

“We have a very effective campaign, and we also did our best,” Williams told Clarion just before the vote. The victors “are going to have to work at getting in touch with their constituency and striking an appropriate relationship with the administration,” said Ryan, who backed the administration. “I have had a very good relationship with the administration,” said Williams.

Peter Ranis, a member of both the PSC executive council and the York chapter executive committee, ran uncontested for chapter chair on a New Causus slate. “In September, we’re going to have a new science high school on campus,” said Ranis (see page 3). “Our priorities are that we have a say in how it develops, and that the faculty involved in the speeded-up planning get summer stipends. And York should get compensated for extra demands on our facilities.”

**BOISTEROUS**

At City College, Larry Hanley ran without opposition for chapter chair. “I want to expand the core of involved faculty, improve faculty work conditions, and strengthen relations between the PSC and other unions, workers and students on campus,” Hanley said. “I’d also like to see a more active and boisterous chapter and see it become an intellectual venue for faculty to debate and promote their vision of the College.”

Gary Benenson, who had been chair at City for the last six years, cited some of the chapter’s past accomplishments. “Under [former CCNY President] Yolanda Moses, they wanted to arm security guards,” said Benenson. “I think, in persuading the President that that was a bad move.” Benenson also proudly pointed to the active involvement of HEOs and CLTs in the CCNY chapter.

At the Graduate Center, Julia Wrigley, previously chapter secretary, ran unopposed for chapter chair on the Democracy slate. Since the election, Wrigley has helped lead a boycott of the GC cafeteria in solidarity with the City College Sidewalk (see page 2). The graduate tuition remission provisions in the new contract will make a big difference to many PSC members at the GC, Wrigley said: “It’s a big step in improving conditions at CCNY.”

At Hostos Community College, Norma Peña de Llorón ran unopposed for chapter chair on the Solidaridad slate. “We want to reestablish the chapter,” said Peña de Llorón. “We have members feeling disassociated from the chapter. We want to bring them back into the fold.”

At John Jay, Jim Cohen ran unopposed for chapter chair on a New Causus slate. “Our goal is to run a very democratic, inclusive chapter where we get as many faculty and staff involved in our activities as possible,” Cohen said. “First order of business: improve working conditions in one of our old and sometimes unsafe buildings, North Hall.”

The previous chapter chair at John Jay, Haiq Bohligen, stepped down after holding the post for 29 years. “Whatever success I may have had has been due in large measure to the support, confidence and cooperation of our college community,” he said.

**INFORMED AND INVOLVED**

In a special election at the Bronx EOC, the new chapter chair, Jacqueline Lefkarites ran uncontested. She said that her priority is to keep her members informed and involved in the current negotiations over EOC contract issues (see page 12). “I’m going to get members the information they need and encourage them to be as active as possible,” Corcoran said.

Overall, New Causus slates were elected in two-thirds of the chapters voting this year.

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**PSC chapter elections held**

By TOMIO GERON

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**PSC news in brief**

**NYUSST conference**

PSC delegates were active at the annual Representative Assembly of the New York State United Teachers (NYUSST), the PSC’s statewide affiliate, held in April in NYC.

Irís Delatorre, vice president of the PSC’s HEO chapter, and PSC First Vice President Steven London were elected as new members of NYUSST’s Board of Directors, while PSC President Barbara Bowen was re-elected to NYUSST’s B.O.D. Three PSC resolutions – on improved pension rights for adjuncts and equity for ORP members – were approved, but not selected as top priorities, by a pension issues committee composed mainly of K-12 teachers. Resolutions supporting academic freedom, immigrant tuition, equity for part-time faculty (including worker’s comp coverage), supplemental TAP and a resolution against appointing City or
UNION VIEWS

Saving Welfare Fund benefits for the future

By STEVE LONDON

For six years running, the PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund has spent more money on benefits than it received in revenues. To make up this yearly deficit, the Fund has had to tap its reserve funds—which are quickly dissipating. Current projections indicate that the Fund will spend down its reserves to nothing sometime late in 2004. Unless corrective action is taken soon, Fund benefits (prescription drug, optical, dental and hearing aid plans, life and disability insurance, additions to basic health insurance (“major med-10”)), and HIP riders) will have to be radically altered to keep the Fund solvent.

The Fund Trustees will not allow such a crisis to develop. They are now bringing to a close a strategic planning process to ensure the Fund’s solvency and save the members’ benefits for the future. A six-month review and planning process has been going on, and the PSC Trustees, volunteers from the Welfare Fund Advisory Board, experts from among the membership, the Fund’s administrative staff, and consultants (see Clarion, February 2002). The Trustees are now considering alternative ways to restructure the Fund to ensure that benefits are not interrupted, and plan a report by summer’s end on what decisions are needed.

PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

How did the Fund get into this shape and what are the Trustees planning to do about it?

Many union welfare funds are reeling from the same political and economic conditions: rising health care costs, shifts in health care practices to out-patient care and drug maintenance, and skyrocketing prescription drug costs. The PSC/CUNY Welfare Fund has not yet adjusted to these circumstances, while restructuring has been taking place in many other benefit funds over the last several years.

The result is that the benefit structure is significantly more comprehensive than other municipal union plans and, given the available resources, cannot be sustained in its present form. This delay in corrective action has meant that the reserve funds are quickly being spent down, making the necessary restructuring more extensive than if it had been done earlier.

The major drain on the fund comes from the prescription drug benefit, and retirees make the most use of prescription drugs. Drug costs (and drug company profits) are increasing at a rate of 20% per year (see Clarion, December 2001). The adjunct health insurance plan also runs at a deficit, but a much smaller one. Active members’ benefits have run at a surplus until now and have partially subsidized retirees’ and adjuncts’ benefits, but as of next year, active member benefits are projected to go into deficit as well.

The impression among some of our membership that the source of the Fund’s financial problems stems mainly from adjunct health insurance is wrong. The primary source of the problem comes from runaway prescription drug costs, lack of Medicare coverage for prescription drugs, and no sane national health care policy, in combination with the utilization patterns of our membership.

In the absence of a shift in national policies, the union leadership and Fund Trustees will have to take action to ensure that the Fund serves its members. In the wake of the Fund’s financial problems, the trustees have come to the conclusion that concentrating only on the funding side is insufficient and the time has come to evaluate and restructure our benefit package and the methods of delivering it.

The Fund Trustees are considering a range of changes guided by the following principles: 1) maintain substantial equality of benefits between active and retired teachers, although out-of-pocket costs may differ; and 2) make the impact on our sickest members the least burdensome. Among the options being considered are increased co-pays and deductibles for prescription drugs and other benefits, measures to encourage lower use of services, and alternative providers for delivering drug, dental, and life insurance benefits.

DECISIONS

Basic health insurance for full-timers will not be affected by the Trustees’ actions, as it is provided directly through New York City’s health insurance program. Part-time health insurance is currently provided by the Fund; the new contract establishes an enhanced funding stream for part-time health insurance with the collective bargain- ing process administered by the City in the same way as for full-timers.

The restructuring process will include many enhancements, as well as provide current benefits to members at a reduced out-of-pocket expense while saving the Fund money. The Trustees will report on the necessary decisions and have a period for membership comment before the conclusion of this process.

Steve London is PSC First Vice President, a Welfare Fund Trustee and Executive Officer For Member Relations.
TAKING A STAND?

No: it would divide us

By IRWIN YELLOWITZ

A labor union depends on the unity of its members for its strength. Unity is never easy to achieve since even the employment interests of members are not necessarily identical. Union leaders must harmonize differences and maximize identity and unity.

Members will largely agree on many public policies that benefit American workers. Unions can rally behind these political positions, and the politicians who support labor’s views, without endangering the basic unity of their members.

But once we move into policy areas distant from our identification as the faculty and staff of City University, we meet all the differences that exist in society as a whole. Union leaders may be tempted to avoid working on issues that stand on these issues. The policy of the United States on terrorism is just such a splitter.

Our members have their views about the war on terrorism, which cover a wide range of opinions. No matter how crafted, a stand by the PSC will offend many members and weaken our unity. In addition, those who hold seats in the PSC’s Delegate Assembly were elected to pursue the well-defined interests of the membership. To offer policy statements on issues such as the war on terrorism, on which the views of the membership are undefined and diverse, would go beyond their mandate.

If our union’s stand opposes government policy, it will distance us from the general public and give our opponents the ammunition to attack CUNY again by attacking the PSC’s position on the war on terrorism. We would clearly weaken our ability to serve our members by including, in a statement on such an issue.

The PSC needs the support of other unions in our struggles. A resolution concerning the war on terrorism may well alienate us from most of the labor movement, again weakening our ability to defend CUNY and the interests of our members.

Because they want to change society, union activists are often content with using the union to advance their wider political goals. Restraint is always difficult, but restraint is exactly what we need. To preserve unity among our members and with our allies, the PSC should not take a stand on the war on terrorism.

Irwin Yellowitz is professor emeritus of history at CCNY, a member of the PSC Delegate Assembly and chair of the Retirees Chapter.

WAR & PEACE

War and the values of education

By HUGH ENGLISH

Do not pretend to convenient beliefs even when they are righteous; you will never be able to defend your city while shouting.

— Andre Lorde, “For Each of You”

The terror of 9/11 touched us all very much “at home.” But the closeness of this violence offers all the more reason for a thoughtful, educated response that understands that true security will come from global justice and peace, and not from revenge.

As a species and the residents of a planet, we are desperately in need of models of behavior that build negotiation across differences, that reflect the values of rational discourse and open-minded intellectual inquiry. These values are almost completely symmetrical with what I hope for as an educator — the possibility of humans moving from positions of unexamined certainty to open risky query, to a life lived in the mind as well as in the passions, to critical thinking, historical understanding, cultural empathy and exchange.

After 9/11 we got none of this. Instead, we were offered rage, sentimentality, re-venge and rhetorical platitudes that pre-sented all U.S. foreign policy as a struggle against “evil.”

So I was stunned by the words of Colin Powell on his arrival in Israel in April. Arguing that the Israeli Army’s military offensive would not end terror, Powell asserted: “The violence and anger and frustration that feeds your anger will be there unless we find a negotiating process.” (NYT, April 12). Here was one of those fascinating moments of recognition when the obvious becomes suddenly and newly legible. Powell’s thinking, as articulated here, was precisely what could not be spoken after the terrible attacks of last September.

Rage is understandable as an emotion, but it cannot be the place of a government that understands our interests as workers in the academy.

Bush’s ballooning military budget and attacks on civil liberties suggest that it will not. The Bush administration’s unrestrained militarism is in conflict with support for public higher education and support for academic freedom. These connections mean that foreign policy is very much the union’s concern.

Repressive policies affecting workers are often controversial. In the past, such contro-versey hasn’t stopped labor leaders from taking sides. In 1916, Samuel Gompers, then president of the American Federation of Labor, rejected the anti-militarism of much of the labor movement and support-ed “preparedness” for US entry into World War I. But his support for the war didn’t stop government attacks on labor in the years that followed.

In the 1930s, rank and file trade union-ists, including some of our former col leagues, volunteered to defend the Repub-lic in the Spanish Civil War. Today, most would agree that it was in labor’s interest to stop fascist aggression from spreading. But American unionists who fought in Spain were dubbed “premature anti-fas-cists” and hounded by the US Attorney General after 1939.

Not that we are not concerned with one voice on urgent national policies, both domestic and foreign. On Bush’s war policies, whatever position we take as a union must be the result of a vigorous, far-reaching discussion. Our national union has already taken a stand. If we agree with the national AFT position, then perhaps we can be content to let it speak for us. But if we do not, it is our responsibility to speak out.

Stephen Leberstein is Executive Director of the CCNY Center for Worker Education and a member of the PSC Delegate Assembly.

AFL-CIO President George Meany’s con-stant support for US foreign policy, and es-pecially his hawkish pronouncements on the war in Vietnam, are not such a distant memory. Under Meany, the AFL-CIO’s overseas operations collaborated closely with the CIA. AFT President Albert Shanker also supported the Vietnam War, and Shanker never shied away from making foreign policy the union’s policy.

It is true that our members don’t speak with one voice on urgent national policies, but even when they are righteous, we are asked simply to rally around the flag and ask no questions. The Bush administration’s unrestrained policies are a legitimate concern whether we are “for” or “against” the war. But to support the war is to “support the government.” As Andre Lorde points out, “you will never be able to defend your city while shouting.” Let’s stand for our city and country as one world of hope. Both as unionists and as educators, we profess in our work as the only effective way to oppose terrorism.

The shock of 9/11 was not only in the hu-man toll, though that is still hard to com-prehend. It also stemmed from the naive assumption that our city and country were inviolable, no matter what degree of vio-lence and suffering occurs globally — often at the hands of governments and armies supported by U.S. foreign policy. But we live in the world, and must understand how we are connected to it.

Certainly academics and universities have served the interests of the powerful more often than not, but here we find an opportunity to understand our role as one of teaching peace, of examining the roots of global conflicts, of helping to imagine and to articulate solutions. Again, as Lorde sug-gests, “you will never be able to defend your city/while shouting.” Let’s stand for the talking, listening and thinking which we profess in our work as the only effective defenses in a world where “shouting” threatens to obscure all other voices.

Means and ends, while not entirely sym-metrical, are nonetheless always mutually constitutive. We will never make another world of peace and justice possible through war, especially through the vagueness and indeter-minate war that we are now asked to join. Only indolent and tireless talk of peace and justice points toward another possible world. As unionists and as educators, let’s teach peace.

Hugh English is an assistant professor of English at Queens College, where he is Coor-dinator of College Writing Programs.

TAKING A STAND?

Yes: these issues affect us

By STEPHEN LEBERSTEIN

The US labor movement has long taken stands on national polit-i-cal issues — and often on matters of war and peace. To think that organized labor should stay out of international affairs ignores our his-tory — and ignores how workers are affect-ed by such political decisions.

Last October, the Executive Council of the American Federation of Teachers, our parent union, passed a resolution pledging unconditional support for President Bush’s open-ended “war on terrorism.” That same resolution noted the AFT’s “long and proud his-tory” — and ignores how workers are affected by such political decisions. The policy of the United States on terrorism is just such a splitter.

Our members have their views about the war on terrorism, which cover a wide range of opinions. No matter how crafted, a stand by the PSC would offend many members and weaken our unity. In addition, those who hold seats in the PSC’s Delegate Assembly were elected to pursue the well-defined interests of the membership.

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WAR & PEACE

The use of military force

By MICHAEL BARNHART

A cross union ranks, one finds a wide variety of opinions regarding the proper US response to both the September 11 attacks and any future attacks as well. No issue seems to divide us more than the question regarding the role of military force. Especially for those of us who witnessed the disasters of the Vietnam War, it is a very real question whether it is ever legitimate to bomb or attack other countries in the pursuit of national objectives, even if those objectives seem as commendable as protecting ourselves and others from “terrorist” attack.

However, the sheer horror and inhumanity of events all over the world – the genocide in Rwanda, “ethnic cleansing” in Bosnia, the killings in Kosovo and more – should force all of us to carefully evaluate our moral judgments regarding military force. The provision of basic security, the protection of the basic right to life, is such an overwhelmingly important human need that we can never entirely eschew the use of force in its pursuit. To do so would be to turn our backs on the moral obligation to protect the innocent – and that is not an option.

Thus, the question becomes whether the current situation involves such an obligation, to what extent, and whether in such a way that deadly force is called for. In regard to the first of these questions, the fact that we are dealing with an act of terrorism is important. The Bush administration’s rhetoric aside, I agree with those who claim that “terrorism” is a particularly slippery term. However, no one besides the perpetrators has claimed it does not accurately describe the Trade Center and Pentagon attacks. These were attacks directed at civilians, who were not parties to any standing international dispute, with the sole purpose of terrorizing them in the hope of demoralizing a country of which the attackers disapprove due to its values and influence. If this does not qualify as terrorism, I don’t know what does. Every country not only has a right to self-defense; it also has a solemn obligation to protect its citizens from attack, by whatever means are effective and proportionate. Given that the US is responding to terrorism, military force could certainly be justified. If the use of military force is morally permissible, we still face the question whether it is called for in this case. Would other means obtain the sort of basic security and protection to which the American people are entitled? Given the manner in which Taliban authorities responded to diplomatic efforts to obtain the arrest of Osama bin Laden or shut down the operations of Al-Qaeda, the answer has to be “certainly not.” Now that we know how dependent the Taliban was on the military forces of Al-Qaeda, it is clear how impossible such an outcome would have been. Furthermore, even if bin Laden had been turned over, his network would have remained – and its dismantling was and is imperative. Of course, this does not mean that every military action the US military might undertake in pursuit of bin Laden and his network is automatically defensible. But overall, the case in favor of vigorous military action, limited to dealing with the threat posed by Al-Qaeda, is very strong.

Let me be clear: I am not arguing that US military force is always or even usually justified. At most, it can only be supported on a case-by-case basis. Thus, nothing that commends action towards the Taliban automatically justifies the same toward Saddam Hussein and Iraq. While Hussein is a ruthless and destructive leader that the world would be better without, the conditions that justify action in Afghanistan – a demonstrated and imminent threat against Americans and a complete absence of realistic policy alternatives – do not straightforwardly apply in the case of Iraq. Add to this the lack of strong international support, and an invasion of Iraq resembles nothing so much as foolhardy adventurism.

Nor am I arguing that military force alone is sufficient to meet the security obligations we face. The current sort of anti-American feeling that both fuels and comforts the attackers of September 11 has deep and complex socio-political roots. Systemic and widespread poverty in developing nations, repressive and undemocratic regimes that often enjoy American support, loss of autonomy and identity in a fast-changing global economy that undermines traditional values – all of these conspire to make the United States’ hands a dangerous place for everyone, no matter how innocent they may individually be.

True security and protection require we deal with all of these issues no matter how intractable they may appear. That, too, is a fundamental moral obligation.

Michael Barnhart is an associate professor of philosophy at Kingsborough Community College and a member of the PSC Delegate Assembly.

WAR & PEACE

Blowback and security

By PENNY LEWIS

Since September 11, we have become more familiar with a concept that espionage circles have dubbed “blowback.” Cold-war alliances and policies intended to maintain US hegemony “blow back”: at one extreme, former allies turn their weapons against the state that supported – even created – them. In a broader sense, militarism brings with it another form of blowback. The wars we wage abroad are also waged at home. These austerity wars, where military investments drain resources from domestic spending, and wars against our own freedoms, as civil liberties come under attack: “Blowback,” in all its variations, is an important reason why the PSC should oppose the current phase of war and militarism through which the US is moving.

In today’s dollars, Bush’s proposed military budget, $466 billion, is $41 billion over the average during the Cold War years. It is greater than the combined expenditure of the next 25 military powers, and over six times that of its closest rival, Russia.

Eisenhower’s “guns or butter” antonymy has been decisively decided in favor of guns. If “butter” means affordable health care and housing, modern transport systems and competitive schools, US international rankings indicate the limits of the sword: the US is the overwhelming leader in arms, and well before other developed countries in all the rest. Bush’s proposed $46 billion increase in military spending represents more than total federal spending on either health care ($41 billion) or primary, secondary and vocational education combined ($45 billion). These upside-down priorities are not short-term emergency measures: we are promised that this “war on terrorism” will last for a long, long time.

Those who question the blanket check for war risk being branded as unpatriotic, even “seditionous” (in the words of one CUNY trustee). Recent legislation and executive orders have given the government new tools with which to suppress dissent. The rights to free speech and assembly, the right to privacy, the right to a prompt and public trial – all are under assault. It is possible in this country today to be jailed without charge and see habeas petitions held indefinitely, with no knowledge of the evidence used against you and be denied the attorney-client privilege necessary to defend yourself. Police have been given expanded powers to carry out search and seizure, wiretaps and cyber-surveillance, and inspection of medical and academic records. These efforts to downsize the Bill of Rights pose a serious danger to academic freedom.

Domestic blowback could be sufficient reason to oppose militarism and war. Yet many object to the repression and getwary priorities described above accepting this war as “necessary,” or even “just.” But condemning the one and embracing the other is a tenuous position at best. The war in the name of “homeland security” trumps dissent over the domestic details. If we accept that this is a war to defend our lives, it is difficult to strenuously object to the measures taken on its behalf. Pro-war resolutions by national associations to which we at CUNY belong, from the American Association of State Colleges and Universities to the AFL-CIO, create a political logic that makes their criticisms of US intervention has time and again been an obstacle to the establishment of free and democratic societies.

We need to question the invidious logic of our government’s support for repressive regimes and question whose interests are being represented. We should question the consistent support that the US shows for economic polices that contribute to regional impoverishment and the polarization of wealth.

The terrorism on which the US has declared war is not the product of a free and fair society, but rather those of, fundamentalist or desperate or both, who use this “weapon of the weak” to destabilize or wrest concessions from the strong. Yet US policies till the soil for the very forces that US leaders aim to “weed out” from “evil” places around the world.

Far from being the protector of security and freedom, this war makes them casualties – at home and abroad.

Penny Lewis is a Writing Fellow at BMCC and a Ph.D. candidate in sociology at the Graduate Center, where she is working on a dissertation about the US labor movement’s response to war.
Organizing at RF heats up

Talks stall, management seeks 24-hour-a-day schedule

By TOMIO GERON

While CUNY faculty and staff have a tentative agreement in place to be ratified by members, staff at the CUNY Research Foundation (RF) are now in their 20th month without a contract.

Though there has been some progress in the RF negotiations, major sticking points remain. Management recently increased its salary offer to 3.5 and 4.5 percent raises in the 3rd, 4th and 5th years of the contract and dropped its refusal to give retroactive pay, but declined to move from 2.5 percent, below the rate of inflation, in each of the first two years.

PSC members at the RF say their work has increased, while their pay has not. “RF members are real disappointed that the way to cut expenses is to deny employees a fair salary increase,” said Tony Dixon, the RF’s Faculty Ad-hoc Council, asking the group to help move the negotiations.

CUNY-wide contract vote in progress

By PETER HOGNESS

Ballots were mailed out on May 6 for the ratification vote on the proposed contract between the PSC and CUNY, with a deadline of May 24 for their return to the American Arbitration Association (AAA).

Clarion went to press before the end of the voting period; we will cover results in our next issue.

A total of fifteen hundred members attended a series of special chapter meetings on the contract held in April. A May 13 meeting, for members from any CUNY work site, drew about 70 people to the Gradu-ate Center, despite heavy rain.

Questions and comments reflect-ed both broad support for the pro-

posed agreement and a determination to win more in the next round of bargaining. “For HEOs, the fact that we put equity raises in this contract was very important,” said Higher Education Officer Miriam Thompson of Queens. For the next contract, she said, “making the title a promotion is the most important HEO issue.” Librarians raised the need for annu-al leave; adjuncts stressed such issues as salary parity and job security.

To make progress in the next round of bargaining, said First Vice President Steve London, “All of us have to get behind each one of us.”

In that vein, members from other work sites were invited to join a picket line on May 21 outside a meeting of the Board of Directors of the CUNY Research Foundation (see ar-ticle above), and given a report on negotiations for PSC members at CUNY’s Educational Opportunity Centers (EOCs). “We can’t let any part of the University get just a 1% or 2% increase,” Bowen told the meeting. “It’s unfair to them, and it would lower the floor for us all.”

PSC members at the four EOCs – in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan and Queens – negotiate their salaries in a separate agreement attached to the overall CUNY contract. Since EOC funding comes from SUNY, both SUNY and CUNY management are on the other side of the bargaining table. At the first two sessions, on April 20 and May 6, management demanded steep con-

cessions from the PSC.

“Their demands, especially for incoming faculty, would mean a seri-ous erosion of salaries, job security and professionalism,” said Brooklyn EOC Chapter Chair Amy Nicholas, who is a member of the PSC’s EOC bargaining team. “We said at the table that we would not agree to anything that downgraded the quality of the EOCs,” said Bowen.

This is the first time that members from the EOCs have been directly in-

volved in the negotiations; Nicholas and Gene Plunkett, chair of the Man-

hattan EOC chapter, are both mem-

bers of the PSC bargaining team. “People were just astounded at manage-

ment’s demands,” said Nicholas. “I really believe they are going to get involved.”

CUNY workers anywhere can be forced to work around-the-clock, in violation of the existing contract, which remains in effect until a new one is signed. After the PSC filed a Step Two griev-ance, the RF placed those workers in the right plan. Negotiators last met on May 15, but no significant progress was made.

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With the major PSC contract signed, now is the time for us to add our muscle to the contract struggles of one of the other groups we represent. The 70 employees of the Research Foundation are being stymied by management, which has of-fered them “increases” below the level of inflation. This is intolerable — for all of us. If CUNY workers anywhere can be forced to accept such a contract, the door is opened for similar contracts for the rest of the PSC in the future. Management also wants to compel the RF to work around-the-clock, in- cluding midnight shifts! We can’t let any PSC members work under these conditions. Call Richard Rothbard at (212) 417-8500 or email him at richard_rothbard@fcuny.org and tell him that you, as a CUNY colleague, will not stand for such a demeaning contract being offered to any CUNY worker. An injury to one is an injury to all.