

Clarion

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



DECEMBER 2002



Igor Kopelnitsky

**PUBLIC
INVESTMENT
VS.
TUITION
HIKE**

OUT OF REACH?

For thousands of CUNY students, a tuition increase would put college out of reach. But a tuition hike wouldn't just be bad for students – it would be bad for New York. *Clarion* takes a look at what caused the State and City budget deficits, and dissects the myth of no money. **PAGES 6-7**

NEWS FLASH

Member action blocks City cuts

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BARGAINING

RF chapter wins!

After two years without a contract, organizing pays off as workers win a 18.76% raise over five years at the Research Foundation. **PAGE 5**



HEALTH

CUNY hiring faculty to train more nurses

The nursing shortage is bad. The shortage of nursing faculty is worse. So was closing CCNY's School of Nursing a bad idea? Even a dummy could answer that. **PAGE 3**

A GUIDE

Your rights under the new contract

First in a series of articles about how to make the new provisions work for you. This issue: the adjunct office hour and the Distinguished Lecturer title. **PAGE 9**

UAPC workers get date for an election

By MAGGIE DICKINSON

Workers at the University Applications Processing Center (UAPC), which processes all undergraduate applications to CUNY, have secured a date of December 4 for their vote on union representation.

UAPC employees, who are paid through the CUNY Research Foundation (RF), had asked management to voluntarily recognize the PSC as their representative in early October, after 80% of them had signed PSC membership cards. While local UAPC management said they were open to the idea, RF Interim Executive Director Richard Rothbard rejected it. Workers then decided to file for an election through the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) on October 21.

The next step was a November 4 meeting at the NLRB for the two sides to work out the details of the election. Two basic issues had to be resolved: who is eligible to be in the union, and where and when the election will take place. Usually hearings are needed to settle these issues, which can go on for months.

Often management will try to drag out this process, in order to undermine union support.

"Our goal was to avoid a hearing. We wanted to get a date that day in order to have an election as soon as possible," said Mary Jane Brown, a 15-year employee in UAPC freshmen applications. And after several hours of negotiations, the UAPC employees succeeded: all outstanding issues were settled and the date was set for December 4.

Management initially presented a list of 30 people they felt should be excluded from the vote, on the basis of being either supervisors or confidential employees. Of those 30, the team was able to win back 8.

MAJORITY NOW

"We felt we had to go for the majority and fight to include the rest of the people later, once we win," said Bernadine Kamwanya, a PSC member in UAPC's financial aid department. "It was great to get it done in one day. Everyone was so happy that the election is going to be soon."

Mary Sutton of UAPC's clerical section told *Clarion*, "It was obvious



Over half of the workers at the UAPC have already pledged in writing that they will vote yes in the December 4 elections.

that the RF lawyer didn't want to deal with us. But it was good that we were there, because we have firsthand knowledge of the UAPC."

Since then management has been waging an active anti-union campaign. When UAPC staff wore "Union Yes!" T-shirts at work, UAPC management told them they had to take them off or go home. After 20 UAPC workers marched into Director Les Jacobs' office to object and after the PSC's attorney inter-

vened, management backed off. UAPC management also tried to tell staffers that they could not discuss the union while at work. But UAPC workers responded that it is illegal to censor what workers can and cannot talk about, and they have refused to stop talking about the union.

Management has also been holding "captive audience" meetings, pressuring workers to vote against the union. Neil Robert, a 16-year veteran in the Operations Department,

said that the meeting he attended did not change anyone's mind. "In fact what they're doing is making us stronger," Robert said.

The December 4 vote will take place at the UAPC, in Building T2 at Kingsborough Community College and at the CUNY Office of Admission Services, in the Grace Building.

"We are looking forward to a landslide," says Brown. "The higher the percentage voting yes, the stronger our contract will be. And we deserve it."

For the latest info, see www.upsetpress.org/uapc.html.



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.

Time to reform the electoral system

● Ken Sherrill's message in "A Strategy Likely to Fail" (*Clarion*, October 2002) is a pragmatic one: don't bother with the third-party alternative, because there is little chance of it working and to make things worse, it can be counterproductive – by bringing the party you like least into power instead – so reform the party you think represents your best bets.

Sherrill does not adequately consider another option for reform. That is, reforming our winner-take-all election system which ensures that we will be stuck with a two-party system. The two-party system doesn't work anymore in the US, and the Democrats have been pulling the same old tired shtick for years and years: "Vote for us, because if you don't, the Republicans – those big bad wolves – will come into power." It's depressing to read "Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail '72" and realize that this same trick was being used back then.

Enough is enough. Either the election system is reformed, or the mainline parties reform. Right now, the two US parties are indistinguishable (and I say this seriously), and big-money interests ensure that no co-opting of the party's platforms is re-

ally possible. But then perhaps big-money interests might ensure that no electoral system reform is possible either – a depressing thought.

– Samir Chopra
Brooklyn College

Progressive pressure

● Ken Sherrill's argument against progressive third parties ("A Strategy Likely to Fail" – October 2002) is based on the false premise that the benefit of voting for a third party is only hypothetical and can only be realized in the distant future. Even a hard-nosed, rational choice analysis shows, however, that progressives can *only* affect the agenda of *both* major parties in the short term if they have the option of voting for a third party.

If progressives always vote for the Democrats, the Democrats will safely ignore them and move towards the center. Since Republicans would have an incentive to follow the same strategy, the absence of a progressive third party would mean that political outcomes would be decided by centrist voters. If, on the other hand, a third party choice is available, there is pressure for the Democrats to move to the left (since it will not be possible to take pro-

gressives for granted) and for Republicans not to move to the far right (because doing so would make it more likely that the progressives would vote for the Democrats as the lesser of two evils).

In other words, the existence of a progressive third party would force mainstream politicians to pay more attention to progressives, thus shifting the entire political spectrum to the left.

– Costas Panayotakis
City Tech

Ken Sherrill responds: *These letters accuse me of being a realist and I plead guilty as charged.*

Why adjuncts need a CCE

● Some reasons why adjunct faculty must engage in the struggle for a Certificate of Continuous Employment (CCE) for adjuncts:

1) The CCE is *pro-student*. Students have the right to expect that professors, whom they benefit from studying with, will be around next semester.

2) The CCE will ensure steady, *living wage* employment for a *majority* of adjuncts. And because it would help a majority of adjuncts, it can better address the crucial issue

of *diversity*. Adjunct faculty of color will be more included in consideration for the CCE than they would be through seniority alone.

3) Adjuncts are in a sense helping to create a *new* employment accreditation. The CCE would be based upon the demonstrated competence and dedicated service of *each* individual adjunct, not a class action. Perhaps a Certificate of Continuous Employment could be issued *only* after the adjunct's teaching has been evaluated *twice*, not once by her/his department, *after* 10 semesters of teaching. Adjunct Faculty themselves should set a *higher* standard of excellence to win approval of the CCE.

4) With CCE accreditation, adjuncts could take *unpaid professional or family leave* and still be able to return to teach. This would provide an important *non-cash* professional benefit.

The CCE – Don't leave *WORK* without it!

– Chithra KarunaKaran
BMCC

Honor Betty Kapetanakis

● At its October Membership Meeting, the New Caucus recommended and passed a resolution to send a

contribution to the North Star Fund in honor of its former executive director, Betty Kapetanakis, who was killed in an accident in July.

As executive director, Betty was instrumental in helping small, local (frequently minority) community initiatives that would not otherwise have been able to obtain financial support from traditional funding sources. One of those groups was the New Caucus of the PSC, a separate entity working within the PSC, and the caucus from whose nominees the present leadership of PSC was elected.

We know that the entire community joins the Board of Directors of the North Star Fund in mourning her untimely loss, and we congratulate them for continuing their commitment to the shared ideals and innovative approaches for which she worked so tirelessly.

– Dave Kotelchuck, Warren Orange,
Shirley Rauscher, Miriam Thompson
New Caucus Coordinators

Write to Clarion

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

RF contract signed

By TOMIO GERON

After two years of activism and bargaining, staff at the CUNY Research Foundation Central Office finally have a deal.

The PSC and Research Foundation (RF) management signed a new labor agreement on November 19. It provides for a pay hike of 18.76%, after compounding, over five years.

The deal, effective as of Nov. 7, covers the period from Oct. 1, 2000 to Sept. 30, 2005, with annual raises of 4%, 4%, 3%, 3% and 3.5%. Current employees who have been working at the RF since Oct. 1, 2000 will receive 11% in retroactive pay.

UNION POWER

"I've never seen a chapter so transformed by struggle," said PSC President Barbara Bowen. "When negotiations started two years ago, members seemed to have given up hope about improving working conditions. Now red PSC T-shirts are hanging from cubicles and members participate in every phase of the negotiations."

The deal also boosts longevity increments, which are added to base salary after 5, 10, 15 and 20 years. A new 7-year increment has now been

Wage increase tops 18%

added. The amounts used to range from \$300 to \$2,000, but will now run from \$500 (after five years) to \$2,500 (after 20 years). Average salary at the RF Central Office will rise from \$36,811 to \$43,558 over the life of the agreement.

"This is a great time to be here," said Chapter Chair Tony Dixon. "We've built a foundation for this chapter."

RF management had pushed hard for a number of concessions. Its initial offer included no retroactive salary increases – i.e., 0% for the first two years – and only 2% over the next three years. The RF also wanted to start operating on a 24-hour schedule, with the right to assign employees to work a nighttime or graveyard shift. But strong resistance from the PSC forced management to drop these demands.

"I'm speechless," said Steve Lawrence, who has worked at the RF for over 10 years. "As far as I'm concerned, we won every single battle. It's a tribute to the negotiators."

Member actions often pushed ne-

gotiations along. In April, over 100 people rallied in front of the RF offices on West 57th Street to demand a settlement. CUNY faculty signed petitions and sent letters to RF Executive Director Richard Rothbard, stating their support for the RF workers' demands.

In July, union members at the RF voted "no confidence" in management's bargaining team, after RF negotiators walked away from the table. Frustrated with the lack of movement in negotiations, the RF Chapter voted on October 4 to authorize a possible strike. After the strike vote, negotiations moved at a faster pace.

The final sticking point of bargaining was pensions. Management wanted to initiate a new third tier of pensions for newly hired employees, which it had already implemented with non-union RF workers on the campuses and for union employees during the negotiations. After the PSC filed a grievance, those RF employees who had been illegally placed in the new Tier III were re-

"We've built a foundation for this chapter."



Peter Hogness

At the end of the final bargaining session: (from left) Bernadette Drumgoole, Tony Dixon, Dion Brown and Antoinette Morizio

turned to Tier II. The new third tier – which affects only those hired after November 7, 2002 – has a three-year vesting period and will include the same employer contribution as Tier II after the first year of employment.

MAIL BALLOT

As *Clarion* went to press, a chapter meeting was being scheduled for the first week of December for union members to discuss the agreement. Members will vote on the con-

tract by mail ballot in the next two to three weeks.

"It's great," said Chapter Secretary Dion Brown. "But I know there's going to be more to do to protect our rights. I see this chapter going forward in a positive direction."

The PSC negotiating team consisted of RF chapter members Tony Dixon, Antoinette Morizio, Dion Brown, Bernadette Drumgoole; PSC staff members D. Nicholas Russo, Mary Ann Carlese, Louis Guida and Debra Bergen, chief negotiator.

Remediation policy up for vote

By TOMIO GERON

The New York State Board of Regents is set to vote in December on whether CUNY can continue the ban on remedial classes at its senior colleges.

The policy, implemented in 2000, initiated three new skills tests to assess students upon admission. Those who fail any of the three are denied entrance to CUNY's senior colleges; non-credit remedial classes at CUNY are available only at community colleges, and must be completed before any for-credit college work can begin.

Some CUNY faculty and staff have argued that the changes have adversely affected the diversity of CUNY's student body. The PSC's Open Access Committee noted that the proportion of first-time Latino students at CUNY has dropped by 3.1%, from Fall 1999 to Fall 2001.

NO HEARING

Three hundred people testified at public hearings before the remediation ban was first adopted, but this time the State Regents have refused to hold any hearings. In response, CUNY Is Our Future and other groups organized a "People's Hearing" on November 26 at City College.

"I don't see why the Regents will



Tomio Geron

From left: UFS head Susan O'Malley and PSC members Marc Ward, Susan DiRaimo and Bill Crain at the City Council hearing.

not hold a public hearing," PSC President Barbara Bowen told *Clarion*. "The decision on remediation reshaped CUNY and was one of the most significant restructuring decisions in public higher education in the decade. Surely it merits public comment before it is renewed."

Susan O'Malley, chair of the University Faculty Senate, told a November 13 City Council hearing that CUNY's admissions policy is more punitive than SUNY's or that of many nearby private four-year schools. She said that a new State Education Department report showing that 4,157 students were kept out of CUNY's senior colleges by the

new policy, and only 483 of those enrolled in CUNY community colleges. The rest went to another university (1,804) or did not attend college at all (1,439).

PUNITIVE POLICY

"CUNY is losing a lot of students," O'Malley said, "and a good number of young people are opting not to continue their education."

CUNY Vice Chancellor Jay Hershenson questioned these figures, noting that "CUNY enrollment is at record levels." Hershenson told *Clarion* that the current policy is not exclusionary, noting that 10 CUNY campuses still offer remediation –

six community colleges and four campuses offering both 2-year and 4-year degrees.

The University Faculty Senate passed a resolution on October 22, which, while not calling for the current policy to be overturned, did support significant changes. The UFS asked CUNY to allow students who have failed only one of the three tests to enter CUNY's four-year colleges, with one year in which to pass the failed test. The PSC backed the proposed reform at its November 21 Delegate Assembly.

An October 24 report to the Regents by presidents of several universities praised the new admissions policies, but also warned that they had not been in effect long enough to evaluate the effects on access.

The presidents worried about changes in CUNY's SEEK program. "A concern of the team was the possibility that some students who might previously have been admitted to the SEEK program do not appear to be enrolled in the University now. Participation of both Black and Latino students has declined."

These concerns must not be swept under the rug, said the PSC's Bowen. "If the enrollment of black and Latino students has declined," she said, "then the policy as it now exists is not right for CUNY."

CUNY BRIEFS

Rights violation charged

A Lebanese student at the College of Staten Island was subjected to racist taunts by a CUNY security officer after the student posted anti-war flyers, according to a lawsuit filed in mid-November. Student Ayman El-sayed says that when he asked why the officer had torn down anti-war flyers that El-sayed had just posted, the officer responded, "Kill all the Arabs in Iraq." CSI officials told *Clarion* that the incident is under investigation. The suit charges that security officers have violated students' First Amendment rights at several campuses.

CLIP increment lag

The new contract provides teachers in the CUNY Language Immersion Program (CLIP) with base pay additions of \$1,000 for each two years they have worked in the program, to a maximum of \$3,000. But management has yet to agree to a plan for disbursing the money. "I had hoped to have this money in the summer and now it seems I might not have it by Christmas," said BMCC CLIP teacher Iris Schickerling-Georgia. "The union is pressing to ensure that people get paid the longevity they are owed as soon as possible," said PSC Executive Director Debbie Bell. "These people need their money."

CUNY expands nursing faculty

By PETER HOGNESS

If a nurse must care for five patients instead of four, their risk of death goes up by 7% over the next 30 days. When the number of patients per nurse rises to eight, odds of death increase by 31%, according to a study of 168 hospitals in Pennsylvania published in the October 23 *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

These are the human consequences of today's nursing shortage, and CUNY is expanding its nursing programs in response. Last summer Chancellor Matthew Goldstein announced that CUNY would add 30 full-time nursing faculty during the 2002-2003 academic year, in line with the recommendations of a CUNY nursing task force.

"It's in the interest of the public welfare," said task force member Elizabeth Errico, head of the nursing program at Hostos. "If we don't have enough nurses, health care is going to suffer." Because of a lack of faculty, CUNY has turned away qualified nursing

Seven years after CCNY nursing school was closed

students, the task force reported.

The 30 positions will not be easy to fill, as evidenced by the fact that 22 of them are nursing lines that

have been vacant for some time. Only eight will be newly created lines.

"There's a nursing shortage across the country - but there's an even more acute shortage of nursing faculty," said Delores Shrimpton, co-chair of CUNY's Nursing Discipline Council and department chair at Kingsborough since 1995. Joan Johnston, associate professor of nursing at Lehman, told *Clarion* that the average age of nurses in New York is about 45. "It's definitely an aging population," said Johnston, "but the average age of nursing faculty is even older. In New York it's over 50."

In other words, the supply of nurses can't be turned on and off like a spigot. CUNY's expansion of its nursing faculty is in part a move to recover ground that it lost in 1995, when City College's School of Nursing was shut down. Johnston, who taught at City then, had argued that the move was shortsighted. "At the time nurses were

being laid off," she said - but in just a few years "we not only had a shortage of nurses but also a shortage of programs to train them."

BAD DECISION

Chancellor Goldstein, who serves on two hospital boards, has expressed regret about the 1995 decision, made by former CCNY President Yolanda Moses under the chancellorship of Ann Reynolds. "There is a dire nursing shortage," Goldstein told the University Faculty Senate in April 2001.

"Some decisions were made in the past that closed nursing programs, which was unfortunate."

The CCNY School of Nursing was closed after CUNY's Trustees declared a state of "financial exigency," and Reynolds pressed schools to shift resources away from programs considered low priority. But many of the projected savings from closing the school were never realized, said Johnston, who served on the college's retrenchment committee. "The total number of nursing majors was about 800 at the time, of which 250 were actually in nursing courses and the rest in pre-nursing," she explained. "I've been told the college didn't actually save

very much, because we lost revenue when we lost these students."

Today's nursing shortage has its roots in the very factors that produced an apparent "nursing glut" in the mid-1990s. Hospitals "started increasing patient ratios as a result of HMOs," said Errico, "aiming to get more work done with fewer nurses. That did not prove to be a positive thing." The result was a deterioration in patient care, as reflected in the Pennsylvania study and a similar 799-hospital study published in the May 30 *New England Journal of Medicine*. Now hospitals nationwide are scrambling to hire more nurses, and states like California are starting to require minimum staffing levels.

Low salaries at CUNY will be the main obstacle to filling the new nursing faculty lines, said Shrimpton. "A beginning RN with an AA degree can make about \$55,000 in Brooklyn," she said. "We're offering nursing faculty less than \$50,000. How are we supposed to attract anyone?" Fewer than 10% of the RNs in the

US have a master's degree, she said, and only about 3% have a doctorate. "Someone with a doctorate in nursing can earn over \$100,000 in a hospital," commented Johnston.

"The scramble to fill nursing faculty positions so soon after the same positions were cut illustrates the danger of basing academic policy on the short-term needs of the market," said PSC President Barbara Bowen. "It shows that the University must listen to faculty and staff."



BMCC nursing students and a "patient simulator"

Gary Scholichet

The current nursing shortage will last a long time.

Constitutional changes pass DA

By TOMIO GERON

On November 21, the PSC Delegate Assembly (DA) approved an amendment to the PSC Constitution expanding representation on the union's Executive Council (EC) for adjuncts, Higher Education Officers (HEOs) and College Lab Technicians (CLTs).

The change was approved by a vote of 70-1 with 2 absentions. Part-time instructional staff will now have four representatives on the PSC EC instead of only one, and the number of HEO and CLT representatives will increase from three to four.

FOUR EACH

These constitutional changes will give each of the union's main constituencies - senior colleges, community colleges, part-time instructional staff and HEOs/CLTs - four EC representatives.

In the discussion at the DA, Vice President for Part-time Personnel Marcia Newfield said it would be only fair for adjuncts to have more than one representative on the EC, since adjuncts make up 8,000 of the

Equity in representation of adjuncts, HEOs, CLTs

17,000 people in the PSC bargaining unit.

"Part-timers and adjuncts are often treated as second-class citizens at work," she said. "They shouldn't be treated that way in their union."

WHO VOTES

A few delegates worried that as adjuncts can also hold other posts on the EC, there could be over-representation from adjuncts in the EC. "There could be an imbalance of representation down the line, though I realize that isn't the case now," said Michael Barnhardt of Kingsborough Community College.

But others were unconcerned. "If we think concretely about [adjuncts'] structural position in the University - the hours they work, straddling many campuses - I think we should be grateful that they're willing to serve at all," said Ros Patchesky of Hunter. "Any worries that there will be over-representation seem to me to not be part of the real world."

The PSC's EC includes represen-

tatives from different constituencies in the union, and at the same time tries to provide each member with equivalent representation.

"Fair representation is really the reason we wanted to make this change," Charles Molesworth, chair of the constitution committee told *Clarion*. The impetus for setting up the committee was a similar proposal by former EC Vice President for Part-Time Personnel Eric Marshall

at a DA meeting last year.

For the Constitutional Revision Committee, which proposed the changes, the difficult discussion came with the question of whether only adjuncts should be allowed to vote for part-time officers. Because adjuncts can also vote for senior and community college officers, this could be seen as a "double vote."

The committee finally agreed that the EC officers for part-time affairs

would be voted on by all PSC members, as had already been the case for the vice president for part-time personnel. The changes were not a perfect solution, noted PSC First Vice President Steve London, but were the best way to create equity in the union leadership. "Adjuncts either vote as part of the whole union or we marginalize them in a little group off to the side."

MORE CHANGES

The Constitutional Revision Committee is proposing a set of smaller changes to the Constitution that mainly affect membership categories and eligibility rules for running for union office. These proposals will likely go before the EC and DA early next year.

PROFESSIONAL STAFF CONGRESS/CUNY NOTICE OF SPECIAL NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS - 2002/2003

The following special elections will be held:

1. NYCCT - Welfare Fund representatives (to serve until Spring 2004)
2. The Graduate Center - Welfare Fund representatives (to serve until Spring 2005)
3. Registrars - Chapter Executive Committee (due to the small size of this Chapter, at least a Chair & Vice Chair to serve until Spring 2004)
4. Bronx EOC - Chapter Executive Committee (due to the small size of this Chapter, at least a Chair & Vice Chair to serve until Spring 2004)

5. Queens EOC - Chapter Executive Committee (due to the small size of this Chapter, at least a Chair & Vice Chair to serve until Spring 2004)*

* At the recommendation of the Elections Committee the Delegate Assembly voted that the Queens EOC election be held at the same time as the Spring 2003 General Elections. This will give more employees at the Queens EOC the opportunity to become members of the PSC. In order to vote in this election you must have joined the PSC on or before September 13, 2002. The timetable will be:

- Nominating petitions will be available upon request from Chapter Chairpersons or the PSC office from December 2 to December 30, 2002.

- Nominating petitions must be received at the PSC office, 25 West 43rd Street, 5th floor, New York, NY 10036, by 5:00 PM, December 30, 2002.

- Ballots will be mailed to members on January 15, 2003.

- Ballots must be received at the PSC office by 5:00 PM on February 13, 2003.

- Ballots will be counted at 10:00 AM on February 14, 2003.

A copy of the Rules Governing All General and Chapter Elections is available for all eligible voters from Barbara Gabriel, at the PSC central office.

PSC blocks midyear cuts

By PETER HOGNESS

As *Clarion* went to press, a flood of phone calls and faxes from PSC members had averted nearly \$10 million in City budget cuts to CUNY's community colleges, tuition assistance and the Hunter Campus Schools.

"I think it's extraordinary," said

Lorraine Cohen of LaGuardia, who helped coordinate the lobbying effort. "This shows the power of the members when we decide to really act together and apply pressure to the City Council."

On November 24, City Council Speaker Gifford Miller told WCBS radio that the final deal included about

\$850 million in budget cuts. "But some of the worst cuts – to foster care services, libraries, CUNY and other educational institutions, and seniors – [were] averted," Miller said.

Just ten days earlier, Mayor Bloomberg had put forward a mid-year budget modification with cuts including \$5.9 million from CUNY's

community colleges, \$2.75 million from eliminating the Vallone Scholarship program as of Spring semester, and a 10% cut to the Hunter Campus Schools (the K-12 schools affiliated with Hunter College).

After pressure from PSC members and CUNY administration influenced the intense negotiations

between the Council and City Hall, all of the cuts to community colleges and the Vallone Scholarships were restored.

Most cuts to the Hunter Campus Schools were reversed as well: funds for faculty and staff were restored, with a \$125,000 reduction remaining for administration.

"When I heard on the radio that the money had been restored, it was great to hear CUNY prominently mentioned," said Cohen. "The fact that we've put CUNY on the radar screen is very important in itself."

"It's clear that the City Council and the mayor recognized the political importance of maintaining funding for CUNY," said PSC First Vice President Steve London. "Having suffered a 30% cut in public support in the last 10 years, it would be wrong to cut CUNY further."

But CUNY's budget is not out of danger. "We won an important victory," said PSC Secretary Cecelia McCall. "But people should realize that this situation is now the norm. We will have to be on constant alert."

Top priority, said McCall, is to make sure there is a well-organized Political Action Committee on each campus. "To win the next battle," she said, "our response has to be even stronger and quicker."

Organizing for fair tuition

By PENNY LEWIS
CUNY Grad Center

Even before the official announcement proposing a tuition hike at CUNY, organizing against it had already begun.

The Student Labor Action Project (SLAP) is a coalition that is working against both tuition increases and budget cuts at CUNY. SLAP is part of a new activism, on and off CUNY

campuses, that is mobilizing for affordable public higher education.

Jobs with Justice (JwJ), the PSC, the New York Public Interest Group (NYPIRG) and Hunter's Student Liberation Action Movement (SLAM), the original members of SLAP, began working together to maintain in-state tuition rates for undocumented immigrant New Yorkers last year.

The coalition so far includes stu-

dent representatives from about half of CUNY's campuses, and has major support from JwJ. SLAP's supporting unions include the PSC, CWA District 1, UFCW Local 1500, SEIU 32BJ, and Laborers Local 79. "We're natural allies," explained LeVon Chambers from the Laborers. "Our members went to CUNY, we send our kids to CUNY. What happens to CUNY affects us all."

NYPIRG, CUNY and SUNY at its

chapters has signed up 600 student groups statewide to oppose cuts or higher tuition. SLAP organized testimony at the CUNY Board of Trustees' November 11 public hearing, and is staging a "blitz" of leafletting, meetings and other actions the week of December 2. The aim is to warn students about tuition hike proposals and help bring them to Albany to lobby with NYPIRG on December 4.

For information on how to get involved, contact Penny Lewis at the PSC (212-354-1252, x234), Julia Beatty at Jobs With Justice (212-631-0886), Miriam Kramer at NYPIRG (212-349-6460) or visit www.notuitionhike.org.

Council considers bill to link welfare and education

By TOMIO GERON

The City Council is considering a bill that would alter former Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's highly publicized "workfare" program. If Intro. 93-A becomes law, public assistance recipients could ask permission to count a training or educational program, including attendance at CUNY, as part of their required 30 hours of weekly labor.

"There's no reason to force people out of college to do a workfare assignment. As a public policy measure, it's completely irrational," said Stephen Loffredo, a professor at CUNY School of Law. "Workfare isn't a way to pass people out of poverty, a college degree is."

In 1996, 27,000 welfare recipients were enrolled at CUNY. As of last year, that number had fallen to 6,000. "We want our students back," PSC Secretary and Legislative Director Cecelia McCall told the Council's General Welfare Committee on October 17. "CUNY's senior and community colleges are the best welfare-to-work programs."

EDUCATION NEEDED

The PSC Women's Committee has been active on the issue, drafting a resolution that called for two- and four-year college programs to count as "work activity" for welfare recipients. "This bill will finally enable people on welfare to receive the...education and training that

CUNY students would benefit

they need," said Lorraine Cohen of the PSC Women's Committee in her October 17 testimony.

The current version of the bill, supported by 32 council members, has two significant changes from an earlier draft that was opposed by Mayor Bloomberg. The current version of Intro. 93-A would

allow students a half-hour of out-of-classroom study time for every hour of classroom time each week for the first 24 months, and no study time after that. "For every hour of class time you need a minimum of two hours of homework time," Fran Geteles, a retired SEEK counselor and member of the PSC Women's Committee, told the Council's General Welfare Committee. "This advice would be given to any student."

Geteles noted that most welfare recipients have young children to care for and need the time apart from workfare requirements to study. "If providing access to education and training is worth doing, then it should be done right," she said. "Do not put such an excessive burden on students that you're setting them up for failure."

After students get approval from the City's Human Resources Administration (HRA) to take courses, the bill would give them 15 days to find and enroll in an education pro-

gram – down from 30 days in the bill's first draft. This could make enrolling at CUNY more difficult. "If you're talking about CUNY, 15 days is no time at all," says Loffredo.

The City Council is currently negotiating with Bloomberg and hopes to see the bill enacted next year. Advocates hope that General Welfare Committee Chair Bill DeBlasio, who served as Hillary Clinton's campaign manager, will be able to move the bill through without significant additional compromise. "We would be pleased if they adopted this amended version, even though it's weaker than the original," Loffredo said.

WELFARE ROLLS

In the wake of President Clinton's 1996 "welfare reform" law, city welfare rolls fell dramatically. But advocates argue that many welfare recipients entered dead-end jobs or simply left welfare without job options, because of the restrictive new rules. NYC would not allow college students to count work-study jobs or internships toward their 30-hour workfare requirement, and HRA commonly assigned students to workfare slots far away from their college. In 2000, New York advocates won passage of state legislation designed to remove these obstacles, but the City was slow to implement it.

Some advocates hope Bloomberg will be more open to education pro-



PSC Secretary and Legislative Director Cecelia McCall testified at an October 17 City Council hearing on Intro 93-A.

grams for welfare recipients than was Giuliani. But since coming into office this year, Bloomberg has seemed hesitant to take positions on welfare that might anger prominent Giuliani supporters. Some right-wing pundits are strongly opposed to Intro. 93-A, arguing that welfare recipients should stay on workfare and attend CUNY on their own time. "You have 30 hours a week involved, total, in WEP and training activities," Heather MacDonald of the Manhattan Institute told the Council hearing. "That leaves a considerable amount of time to pursue a college education."

In a November 4 *New York Post* op-ed, MacDonald slammed the bill as a return to "no-expectations welfare," when "CUNY got tens of thousands of welfare students who spent countless years in a no-standards holding tank."

Supporters of Intro 93-A say that this ideologically driven position ignores the real obstacles to getting people off welfare and into decent jobs. "This bill costs the City nothing and in the medium term it saves the City money," said Loffredo. "It helps people off welfare and creates a more highly trained workforce which contributes to the tax base."

Deficits, decisions & the public interest

By PETER HOGNESS with
CHRISTINE D'ONOFRIO, Queens CWE

Even before an official proposal was on the table, the battle lines were being drawn. Some argued that a tuition hike for CUNY and SUNY is only common sense. There is no money, they said, pointing to daily headlines about budget deficits. And if there is no money, then students must pay more.

But CUNY's just-announced bud-

Winners, losers and who will pay

get request does not envision raising tuition. The PSC is opposed to a tuition hike, as are many other unions, civic groups and student organizations (see p. 5), and they are raising stubborn questions.

Is it true that "there is no money"? When taxes were cut, where did the money go? If tuition is raised at CUNY, how would this affect stu-

dents, faculty and staff? How would it affect New York? *Clarion* takes a look at the roots of the current crisis, and what it means for CUNY.

HOW WE GOT HERE

How did we go from nearly \$7 billion in State and City surpluses to \$16 billion in deficits within two years? It was all too easy. This crisis

is the predictable outcome of the economic and fiscal policy choices of the last several years.

New York City's budget shortfall is expected to be \$1 billion in the current fiscal year and over \$6 billion next year. Next year's State deficit could be as large as \$10 billion. But tax cuts favoring the wealthy have reduced State and City revenues by about \$15 billion a year. It's not too hard to connect these dots. Recession and the Sep-

tember 11 attack exacerbated an already existing budget problem.

Governor Pataki avoided talking about the budget crisis during the campaign, and has yet to offer any plan for dealing with it. When he breaks his silence, the governor is universally expected to call for raising CUNY and SUNY tuition. But while Pataki is sure to present the idea as inevitable, PSC members should remember: the battle of the budget has only begun.

New debate over taxes

By GLENN PASANEN
Lehman College

For the first time in more than a decade, New York is in a debate about raising taxes. City government has enacted an 18% property tax increase. Discussion is heating up over how to make new taxes progressive so that those who can best afford it would pay more.

Mayor Bloomberg's proposed 25% property tax hike would have raised as much as \$2.5 billion. Commercial property owners pay about 44% of any increase. But for residents the City's property tax is regressive: an across-the-board rate increase will fall most heavily on renters (who on average earn much less than homeowners) once it is passed on through higher rents. So this is an imperfect revenue strategy, but one that may prove necessary: the property tax is the only tax that can be raised by NYC without an OK from Albany.

Bringing back the commuter tax – worth \$450 million a year – has been a priority for NYC's City Council. Mayor Bloomberg now backs the idea in a different form: instead of a separate tax for commuters, he wants to apply the regular NYC income tax to all who earn wages here. Bloomberg points out that most US cities with an income tax – including Los Angeles, Kansas City, Pittsburgh and Yonkers – require both residents and non-residents to pay. The mayor's plan would bring in over \$2 billion next year.

THE TOP RATE

Bloomberg simultaneously proposed reducing the City's income tax rates, a move that would give the biggest benefit to those with the highest income. Under the mayor's plan, the top rate would drop from 3.65% to 2.25% by 2007. The 25% reduction proposed for next year would lower revenue collections from city residents by roughly \$1 billion.

A more progressive alternative to the mayor's property-tax plan could include a personal income tax sur-

charge, or adding a higher tax rate for those earning over \$250,000. A 12.5% surcharge was added in 1990 and eliminated in 1998; restoring it would raise about \$700 million. Increasing the top rate to 4.8% on income over \$250,000 would raise a similar amount.

At the State level, the Fiscal Policy Institute (FPI) estimates that two relatively small surcharges – a 7/10ths of 1% surcharge on income over \$100,000 and another 7/10ths of 1% on income above \$200,000 –

would yield almost \$3 billion per year. The State's top income tax rate, now 6.85%, has been reduced by more than half over the last 25 years. These proposed surcharges would only bring New York's top rate to the same level as North Carolina's, and State Sens. Arthur Eve and Marty Luster have supported the idea.

State Sen. Eric Schneiderman has introduced a bill that would freeze State tax cuts scheduled to take effect in the next three years. This would net over \$2 billion, and per-

haps double that amount. Reversing Pataki's reductions in New York's estate and gift taxes, which mainly benefit the wealthy, would mean about \$700 million in new revenue. FPI has also called for restoring NY's Corporate Minimum Alternative Tax to prior levels, citing the \$1 billion recouped by New Jersey when it recently closed corporate tax loopholes.

FPI argues for a restoration of the City's stock transfer tax (repealed in the 1970s) at one-tenth its original rate, which would raise over \$800 million a year. Sixty-four percent of NYC residents support the idea, according to a poll conducted

for the Working Families Party.

In his Green Party campaign for governor, Stanley Aronowitz of the CUNY Grad Center noted that federal Social Security taxes exempt all income over \$80,400. He urged New York State to introduce a 2% "Emergency General Welfare Tax" on that exempt income, estimating that this would bring in \$4 billion or more.

Although not, strictly speaking, a tax, Bloomberg has another bold revenue idea on the table – putting tolls on City bridges. Revenue estimates range from \$320 million to \$800 million, depending on how it is implemented.

Freezing state tax cuts would net over \$2 billion.

Tax cuts: who gained?

Where did the money go?

By HOWARD CHERNICK
Hunter College

The imprudence of the series of tax reductions by New York City and State since 1994 is now becoming painfully clear. High-income New Yorkers gained so much from so many tax cuts that it does not seem unreasonable to ask them to pay more today.

STATE SLASHES

State tax cuts since 1994 are reducing revenues this year by \$13.9 billion. When Pataki's tax cuts are fully implemented, the cumulative total of lost revenue will be over \$100 billion – enough to pay for two-and-a-half State budgets. Here are some key examples, and their current cost:

- **Cuts in the state personal income tax:** \$6.4 billion. In the cuts enacted in 1995, the poorest 20% of New Yorkers got almost nothing – \$8 per taxpayer. The wealthiest 20% got 65% of the tax reduction. The richest 1% got fully 24% of the total tax reduction, saving an average of \$11,028 each.

- **Estate and gift tax cuts:** \$656 million. Mainly helps the wealthy.

- **STAR (School Tax Relief):** \$2.9 billion. The STAR program, by de-



The Giuliani-Pataki tax cuts dug New York into a budget hole.

sign, excludes renters, offers higher homestead exemption levels in higher property value areas, and is funded by the State. Its net impact is regressive – i.e., it provides more benefits to richer taxpayers. This program is deliberately designed to provide suburban tax relief, at the expense of New York City.

- **Increase in the Earned Income Tax Credit:** Over \$300 million. Increased the State EITC to 25% of

the federal credit, benefiting low-income New Yorkers.

- **Corporate tax cuts:** Since 1995, New York's corporate income tax revenues have fallen by almost 25%. Since 1977, corporate income tax has fallen by over 50% as a proportion of total taxes. These cuts primarily benefit the owners of capital in New York State.

CITY CUTS

Since 1994, New York City has en-

acted tax cuts that add up to \$2.8 billion a year:

- **Expiration of 121/2% personal income tax surcharge:** \$858 million. Because the income tax is graduated, richer people pay a larger proportion of income in taxes. Eliminating this surcharge gave the biggest benefit to high-income residents.

- **Commuter tax repeal:** \$495 million. Benefits were realized entirely by non-residents. According to the Independent Budget Office, the average income of commuters is three times higher than that of NYC residents. So this tax repeal disproportionately helps higher-income people, who benefit from City services but now pay less for them.

- **Commercial rent tax reduction:** \$558 million. A tax on commercial rent payments, it was eliminated for properties north of 95th Street in Manhattan and in the outer boroughs. Though the commercial rent tax appears to be part of the rental bill, economic analysis suggests most of it is ultimately borne by owners of buildings and land. Owners of business property are relatively high-income, and they are the main beneficiaries of these cuts.

- **Sales tax exemptions on clothing and footwear under \$110:** \$226 million. As a proportion of income, benefits are greater for low-income consumers.

- **Co-op/condo property tax relief:** \$194 million. Weighted towards higher-income owners.

Bill Tumbull/New York Daily News

The future of public higher education

The case against a tuition hike

By JOHN HYLAND
PSC Treasurer

Once again, there is talk of increasing student tuition at CUNY and SUNY. Elected officials and policy-makers project budget deficits in the billions. They call this a budgetary "Perfect Storm," a convergence of economic events and forces so powerful that nothing can stand in its way.

But the underlying problem is not "natural," like a storm, formed by forces beyond our control. Today's City and State budget gaps are self-inflicted. Tax cuts since 1994 have reduced revenues by \$15 billion per year – about the same amount as next year's budget deficits. This is a "storm" made by human hands. It is the result of past policy choices, and we have choices to make today about how we will respond.

A LOSING STRATEGY

Some say that in these tough times, CUNY should raise tuition. But the record shows that tuition increases are a losing strategy for CUNY. City University tuition was raised twice in the 1990s – and by the end of the decade, CUNY had \$159 million less in total funds. The reason CUNY is starved for resources today is that its State and City funding was cut by 30% in the 1990s. CUNY's problem is a revenue hole, not largesse toward its students. Unless we pose and analyze the problem accurately, we will fail to address it in an effective way.

Proponents of a tuition hike claim that it would not hurt the poor, because the increase would be covered by financial aid for low-income students. But the reality is that a tuition hike will force thousands of poor students to drop out of college. When tuition was instituted in 1976, even with financial aid, CUNY lost over 50,000 students. When tuition was increased by \$750 in 1995, CUNY lost 8,000 students.

If we accept a tuition hike, we will find that financial aid is a false and unreliable solution. Financial aid must be reauthorized every year by the same politicians who now are proposing an increase in tuition. New York has already eliminated the Supplemental Tuition Assistance Program (STAP), and has proposed cuts to TAP again and again. The result has been an annual dance in which we fight to restore the cuts to TAP, but even when we win CUNY gains no new resources. Mayor Giuliani did the same dance with cuts to the Vallone Scholarship program, which Mayor Bloomberg sought to eliminate altogether.

In addition, the complexities, bureaucracy, and waiting lines of the financial aid system are obstacles that discourage students from using



Students, faculty and staff marched to City Hall last Spring to oppose cuts to tuition assistance.

it, despite the efforts of our colleagues and members who work valiantly under difficult conditions to make financial aid work as effectively as possible.

Public colleges were founded to provide higher education at nominal cost, so that it would be available to all. Free public colleges functioned quite well during two world wars and the Great Depression. After WWII, the GI Bill of Rights demonstrated the effectiveness of broad, democratic, public higher education. In the 1960s, the original Pell Grants were only designed for students in private colleges: lawmakers assumed public college costs would remain so low that no financial aid would be needed.

Today the tuition/financial aid routine is a shell game, shuffling money back and forth, hiding the constant erosion of public life.

ROBIN HOOD IN REVERSE

Studies by the Fiscal Policy Institute and the New York State AFL-CIO show that over the last 20 years, the federal, State and City tax systems have been restructured to the advantage of the extraordinarily wealthy few and to the disadvantage of working people. We are living in a land of Robin Hood-in-reverse.

A tuition increase at CUNY and SUNY would keep us on this same failed path. Increased tuition – like increased subway and bus fares – is

a user fee that hits poor and middle-income workers the hardest. The more that public services must rely on user fees to "pay for themselves," the less they are truly public. What's next – turnstiles at the entrances to public libraries and Central Park? "Tuition" to go swimming at the Rockaways or Coney Island?

TAP money goes to students at both private and public colleges. Ultimately, TAP plus tuition hikes at CUNY and SUNY is a formula for erasing the distinction between public and private higher education in New York State.

Which is fine with CHANGE-NY, the Manhattan Institute and other ideologues on the right – they're hostile to the idea of public higher education in the first place.

At CUNY and SUNY, a shift has already taken place: the costs of so-called public higher education have been increasingly moved from public support to private individuals. During the 1990s, the proportion of CUNY's budget that was paid for through tuition almost doubled, from 21% in 1990 to 37% in 2000. As a share of family income, New York's community colleges are now *the most expensive in the US*. New York's public four-year colleges are the nation's third most costly.

The deep problem not addressed by a tuition increase has a name in the social sciences: stratification, a system of structured inequity and

conflict. A tuition hike camouflages the class, race and gender-based struggles over crucial resources – in this case, educational resources.

CRITICAL INVESTMENT

What has also been left out of the tuition increase scenario is the economic value of public higher education. A high percentage of our graduates remain in the NYC area after graduation, increasing economic activity and tax revenues. People who graduated from CUNY between 1970 and 1997 pay an estimated \$708 million per year more in taxes in New York City and State than if they had not earned a college degree. Their annual spending is \$4.6 billion higher than it would be if they had not gone to college. CUNY's own spending – through construction, purchasing supplies, employee payroll, and other multipliers – supports 300,000 jobs outside the University.

Overall, CUNY is an extraordinary investment in New York's future. And as any owner of a home or business knows, when investment stops, decay begins.

In the 1970s, massive service cuts laid the basis for the social decay and economic decline of New York City in the 1980s. We need not repeat these mistakes. As former City budget director Abe Lackman has said, "In times such as this...a better way to set sensible policy for the long run is to ask which services and priorities should be protected or

possibly even enhanced."

That's why the PSC Executive Council has called for restored funding for CUNY through a fair tax policy, not a tuition increase. A CUNY tuition hike would make New York's problems harder, not easier, to solve. The record of the last 10 years shows that tuition increases are not a solution to disinvestment in CUNY – they are part of the problem.

The PSC has the opportunity and the responsibility to say NO! to a tuition increase. It is not inevitable. We have the capacity to resist, educate and organize. Our membership has the resources to engage in a program of campus discussions on the funding of higher education that would include faculty, staff, students and our communities. As we educate ourselves in this area, we also need to form alliances with unions like TWU, which face similar struggles around the transit fare, and DC 37, whose locals have been hit by privatizing and outsourcing.

Such education and organizing has the potential to generate another kind of "Perfect Storm," a convergence of labor, student and community organizations that says "enough" to the trashing of public life and institutions. CUNY needs us to work for an alternative vision, for policies that will serve "the whole people."

Data in these articles from Fiscal Policy Institute, NYC Independent Budget Office, NYPIRG, NYS Dept. of Taxation and Finance, CUNY Office of Institutional Research.

BMCC escalators grinding to a halt

By **BILL FRIEDHEIM**
BMCC

With annoyance and grudging admiration, a CUNY administrator exclaimed, "You guys are relentless."

The "you guys" in this case were the BMCC chapter of the PSC. In response to what Chapter Chair Jane Young has called an "unbearable situation," the chapter has launched a petition and political campaign to demand action on the crisis of overcrowding at BMCC, the collapse of its elevators and escalators and the resulting dangers to health and safety.

Last year on September 11, BMCC lost a 15-story building next to the World Trade Center with 370,000 square feet of classroom space. With enrollment reaching record levels this fall, over 18,000 students and another 2,000 faculty and staff are now squeezed into one facility built 25 years ago to house a maximum of 8,700. The CUNY space standard for 18,000 students is 1,077,000 square feet. On the first anniversary of the 9/11 attack, BMCC was barely treading water with 507,242 square feet of space – less than half of the minimum standard.

UTTER NEGLECT

The college declared a state of emergency in December 2001 and again in the summer of 2002 when its "vertical transportation system" reached a point of almost total failure. On several days this fall, all four elevators and 16 out of 20 escalators did not function. Many escalators have sat idle for more than six months, becoming highly visible symbols of what many in the BMCC community see as utter neglect by

PSC organizes against a danger to health and safety



A common sight at BMCC: a broken escalator.

the University. In November, mechanics working on the escalators told *Clarion* that CUNY's past failure to perform routine maintenance would ultimately cost it millions of dollars.

BMCC has no freight elevators. As a result, disabled students must compete with cleaning and media equipment, garbage and food deliveries for space on four tiny elevators, which are often out of order. It doesn't help that services for stu-

dents with disabilities are located on the top floor, seven flights up.

One disabled student, who lost both legs a decade ago in a Bosnian land mine explosion, typically spends hours each week negotiating the vertical distance between his classes, often forced to leave the building to get from A to B.

At an October 30 union chapter meeting, one PSC member told of two pregnant students who must walk up six flights of stairs to get to

class and arrive "red-faced, sweating and gasping for breath." Two months into the semester, one of the two went into premature labor.

On September 18, CUNY Vice Chancellor Allan Dobrin and Deputy Chief Operating Officer Ronald Spalter toured the building, and the University has since pledged \$500,000 for short-term repairs. For long-term replacement of the "vertical transportation system," the amount of money available is less than half what would be required. And even that money is by no means secure: an October 24 memo from Scott Anderson, BMCC VP for Administration, noted that "funding is generally becoming precarious for all capital projects."

Because enrollment drives funding for CUNY's community colleges, BMCC is under continuing pressure from 80th Street to increase its FTEs (full-time-equivalent students) – even though it has no place to put them. For almost a decade, BMCC's increasing enrollment has served as a "cash cow" for the University. Despite this, even after 9/11, BMCC's desperate need for capital funds has gone unmet. BMCC plans to increase enrollment to 20,000 FTEs by Fall 2003. What's unclear is whether the college can secure additional space to house all of these students.

WORKING FOR CHANGE

The PSC chapter at BMCC is committed to working to change this situation. The centerpiece is a petition, addressed to Vice Chancellor Dobrin but also aimed at elected offi-

cial and the media. It calls for a *guaranteed* timetable and funding, in place of vague promises. Over 5,275 people have already signed the petition and committed themselves to the campaign – to take escalating political action to make BMCC a healthy and safe environment for learning, teaching and working.

For more information and a copy of the petition, go to www.psc-cuny.org/bmccweb.htm.

Get the lead out

Elevated levels of lead were found in BMCC's ventilation ducts this summer, but now college officials are backing off from an earlier promise to clean up the system.

BMCC officials say they turned the cleanup over to CUNY Central and the Dormitory Authority of the State of New York (DASNY) because of the size of the job. DASNY, however, conducted its own tests and insists that lead levels are not high enough to pose a danger, according to BMCC VP for Administration and Finance Scott Anderson. BMCC has asked the University to run a third series of tests before deciding whether to clean only the outer vents or the inside of the whole ventilation system.

Word of the further tests, delays and indecision shocked PSC Health and Safety Officer Joan Greenbaum. "This has now gone on for almost six months," she said. "It's a simple issue. It's not arms inspection in Iraq." The delays must end, Greenbaum said: "BMCC is on record saying they recognized the problem and that they will clean the ducts."

New drug plan manager for Welfare Fund

By **STEVE LONDON**
PSC First Vice President

The PSC/CUNY Welfare Fund Trustees are meeting this month to make decisions on restructuring, with a target of \$6 million in savings to ensure that Welfare Fund (WF) benefits remain viable in the future. The Trustees are currently considering increased co-pays and deductibles for prescription medicines; instituting a three-tier formulary (generic, preferred brand-name or non-preferred brand-name drugs); equalizing the prescription drug benefit package between holders of NPA cards and those in HIP, Aetna and CIGNA; and alterations to our dental and life insurance plans.

The good news is that so far the Fund's Trustees have been able to save approximately \$2.5 million without touching benefits. The bulk

Changes so far save \$2.5M with no change in benefits

YOUR BENEFITS

of these savings will come from the Trustees' decision, made in late October, to change our pharmaceutical benefits manager (PBM), switching from NPA to Medco Health.

PBMs like NPA and Medco Health are large discount buying companies that administer prescription drug plans. They purchase prescription drugs at a discount from manufacturers and pass those savings along to us. Last June the Trustees sent out a Request for Proposals to a number of large PBMs. This started a bidding war among PBMs for our business. Ultimately, the Trustees chose Medco Health because it will

save millions of dollars for the Fund and our members, while enhancing membership service.

The change from NPA to Medco Health requires members receiving drugs through the mail to switch to Medco Health Home Delivery Pharmacy Service. This transition will be relatively painless. If you have prescriptions with NPA's mail-order pharmacy, CFI, you can switch your prescription to Medco Health in any of several easy ways; details are included in a packet that WF members will receive in the mail.

The packet will explain all aspects of the change from NPA to Medco Health, and the WF staff will be

ready to help you with any questions or problems.

While any change may cause some inconvenience, staying with NPA would have caused significant permanent disruptions. NPA indicated that the only way it could match the Medco Health financial offer would be if WF members were required to use a restricted pharmacy network, which would have meant losing hundreds of participating pharmacies. On a number of other important criteria, Medco Health scored above NPA. The Trustees felt the long-term interest of the members would be best served by moving to Medco Health.

The WF Trustees have heard

Welfare Fund Trustees are considering members' comments & suggestions

many members' concerns and ideas in the last two months of intensive dialogue, in campus meetings and in hearing from people individually. Members have contributed many important comments and useful suggestions. There was also wide agreement on the two main principles for restructuring proposed by the Trustees: 1) maintenance of substantial equality of benefits between actives and retirees; and 2) the impact of the cuts should not fall most heavily on the sickest and most plan-dependent members. Another Trustee proposal, that retirees should have higher out-of-pocket costs, was more controversial.

After this extensive period of consultation with the membership, the Trustees are ready to act. Once they complete their deliberations, members will be immediately notified by mail of plan changes.

What is your favorite labor film?

Clarion's Roving Reporter asks fans of *Labor Goes to the Movies*



Peter Hogness

JACKIE DISALVO
Professor of English
Baruch College

Salt of the Earth. I remember the women taking over the picket lines. And I remember victory. There may be some films from other countries I'd also think of, but that's the one that comes to mind.

It had this whole element of "the personal is political," the women having to fight with the men in their marriages in order to be able to take over the picket line. The depth of its feminist perspective really stands out – and this movie was made in 1954!

Visually, it gave a feel for the whole Southwestern setting. I remember the faces of these Mexican Americans workers – very determined and strong.

Don't miss *I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang* – Friday, 12/15, 6:00 p.m., 99 Hudson Street



Tomio Geron

EVELYN MALDONADO
Senior, liberal arts major
CCNY Center for Worker Education

Dead Presidents. Anthony Curtis, played by Larenz Tate, is a Vietnam vet. There's a scene where he comes back and his own American people don't accept him and don't help him out. They called him a "baby killer" because he was in Vietnam. He tried to get jobs but they weren't paying him enough, so he did what he had to do. That's when he felt the need to hustle. In a lot of urban areas, that's unfortunately what a lot of people think they should do, is hustle like that. I know they did things that were illegitimate, but the movie covers the struggles the characters went through.



Tomio Geron

STEVE LEBERSTEIN
Professor of History
CCNY Center for Worker Education

Death of a Bureaucrat. It's about a government bureaucrat. The film is actually about a Cuban woman who comes to collect death benefits for her husband who had fallen into a cement mixer. The plant that he worked in turned out statues of heroes of the socialist revolution. But with no body, she can't prove that he died. Finally she gets one of the statues in which his body is presumably encased, to show that he actually was done in. It's really a gas. It's one of the few films that actually focuses on the work [of bureaucracy] and what it means to do this kind of work and what it does to the people who do it. Most of it occurs in government offices, showing the relationship between government regulations and the ordinary life of people and how absurd it is.



Tomio Geron

HENRY EISLER
Guidance Counselor
P.S. 255, Brooklyn

Norma Rae. It showed how a woman who was from the backwoods – who really had nothing – with determination pulled everybody together and unionized the factory. It was very inspiring. She had guts, she had drive. I think she had all the qualities that we think of as American. It was a satisfying movie. I remember the scene when one person had a heart attack and fell down on the floor and died because he was asked to work a little longer when he wasn't feeling well. It really sticks in my mind; it was frightening and upsetting.



Peter Hogness

HARRY CASON
Adjunct Lecturer, Political Science
College of Staten Island

Harry Bridges: A Man and His Union. He was an immigrant who got involved in the longshoreman's union. They kept threatening to throw him out of the country. But he kept growing in stature. They called him a communist, but he fought vehemently for the longshoremen. They just harassed him incredibly, but he won the fight.

Perhaps like all of us, Harry came to overvalue his own importance and was too dominant in the union. But he was a real fighter. He did get a hiring hall established. He also took some political stands about US foreign policy that made him really *persona non grata*. They came after him for that.

It's dangerous work, loading and unloading ships. Cables can break. Back then it was all manual labor.

Assisted living, Medicare, SSI NYSUT Social Services can help

By TOMIO GERON

"When the phone rings, we never know what we'll find," said Laurie Kupperstein of NYSUT Social Services. "But we'll do whatever it takes."

For almost three years, New York State United Teachers (NYSUT) has offered counseling on everything from finding assisted living, home care, or support groups to domestic violence assistance to help with public benefits.

"We'll advocate for people if they're not getting what they need – such as services at home, or Medicare appeals," said Kupperstein. The service is absolutely free and can be a godsend for any PSC member, perhaps especially for those who have retired. "It's one of the best things NYSUT has done for retirees," said PSC Retiree Chapter Chair Irwin Yellowitz.

NYSUT is the PSC's state affiliate, and all PSC members thus belong to NYSUT as well. Kupperstein worked on the staff of retiree services at another NYSUT-affiliated union, the United Federation of Teachers, for seven years before she joined the NYSUT staff.

WEALTH OF INFORMATION

Kupperstein recently helped a retiree find assisted living facilities. The retiree, who lives by herself, had just had a heart attack and didn't know how to find the best housing that would meet her needs. NYSUT provided names, fees and reliable descriptions of the services provided at different facilities in her area.

"We also told her about enriched housing, which most people don't know about," said Kupperstein. Enriched housing is less expensive than assisted living, Kupperstein ex-

YOUR BENEFITS

plained, with similar services and more independence. With NYSUT's help, this retiree found a suitable living situation.

Because moving to assisted living can be such a big decision, NYSUT Social Services provides a wealth of information. "If somebody calls us for assisted living information, we ask him what areas he wants to move to," Kupperstein said. "We can find facilities in any area in the country. We also download inspection reports to see whether they're good or not." NYSUT staff can give more detailed evaluations of those facilities that they've been to visit.

NYSUT helps members with many other concerns as well. Scott

Hicks, NYSUT social services specialist, recently received a desperate call from a member who was traveling to Buffalo once a month to give her father, a retiree with mental illness, money to help pay his rent. With his SSI payments so low, she was afraid he would become homeless. The woman was having trouble paying her own bills while also supporting her father.

Not just cutting through red tape, building a relationship

Hicks looked into the problem and found that the father's SSI was wrong – he should have been receiving substantially more money.

In a few weeks Hicks had cut through the red tape of federal bureaucracy and the problem was corrected. The woman no longer had to worry about whether she could pay her own bills, or whether her father would be evicted. It was a serious

problem, but just one of the many that NYSUT handles every day.

NYSUT Social Service staffers do more than provide information or slice through red tape. They also take the time to personally follow up with clients who need assistance. "We can give [clients] a regular call if they're homebound," noted Kupperstein.

"It's really not just information," she said. "A lot of our work is about creating a relationship. Someone will come ask us, 'Can you investigate this facility for my brother?' Six months later, after helping the brother, he'll call back and say, 'Now can you help me with me?' Our members are our members for life."

NYSUT Social Services may be reached at 1-800-342-9810 ext. 6206, or e-mail socsvcs@nysutmail.org. Kupperstein will speak at the Retirees Chapter meeting in May.

A NEW TITLE, A NEW HOUR

Your rights under the contract's new provisions

By **BARBARA BOWEN**
PSC President

First in a series of articles

The real work of a new contract only *begins* when the agreement is signed. If the current contract initiated a transformation of the University, then it follows that the transformation doesn't stop when the ink on the settlement dries. The process continues throughout the life of the agreement and involves us all.

This is the first in a series of articles in *Clarion* designed to clarify your rights under the new contractual provisions. With so much

The title was added to the CUNY Bylaws by the Board of Trustees on October 21, 2002, and is now available for use. Department chairs who seek to hire in this title should initiate the process with their campus administration.

Although the demand for this position originated with management, the union sees the title as an opportunity to expand and enhance the faculty. We urge departments to think creatively about the possibility of hiring distinguished colleagues, especially peo-

ple from racialized minority groups. The distinguished lecturer title presents a perfect opportunity to attract faculty from underrepresented groups and create a culture in which a more diverse faculty will thrive.

The union strongly recommends that the Distinguished Lecturer title be used equitably, in all fields and at all colleges, so its full potential for enriching the University is realized. We suggest that hiring committees throughout CUNY – in community colleges as well as senior colleges – work actively to explore its possibilities.

ADJUNCT PROFESSIONAL HOUR

The purpose of this major innovation in the contract is twofold: to enhance the integration of adjuncts into the professional life of the college, and to give students more opportunities for consultation with their instructors, over half of whom, CUNY-wide, are adjuncts. This provision is designed to pay for at least part of the enormous amount of unpaid work CUNY adjuncts do and to allow them to contribute more fully to University life. Its parameters are as follows:

1) The provision took effect on September 1, 2002 and will remain in force, unless changes are negotiated by the parties to the agreement. It is fully funded by the contract settlement.

2) The hour is described in the agreement between the PSC and CUNY as a "professional"

hour, "one (1) additional hour per week in order to engage in professional assignments related to . . . academic responsibilities, such as office hours, professional development, participation in campus activities and training."

3) Adjunct faculty members with a workload of 6 or more contact hours in a given semester at a single college are required to be paid for one additional hour per week at 100% of their normal hourly rate.

4) Colleges may not "opt out" of paying for the professional hour, nor may eligible adjuncts, as defined in #3 above, opt out of performing it. (The union has noted that even before this provision was negotiated, almost all adjuncts performed at least one hour of additional work per week, whether in formal office hours, in informal consultation with students or participation in departmental committees.)

5) Eligible adjuncts are entitled to be paid

for one hour per week for every week of the semester. This includes the fifteenth week of the normal semester as well as winter sessions, such as those at LaGuardia and Kingsborough.

6) If an adjunct reaches eligibility for the professional hour at two campuses, then the adjunct must be paid for and perform the professional hour on both campuses.

7) The professional hour does not count toward the maximum adjunct teaching workload as defined in Article 15.2 of the contract. For instance, an adjunct who teaches 9 hours at one college and 6 hours at a second college will be paid for 2 professional hours, one at each college. Even though this adjunct will be paid for a total of 17 hours, he or she will not be considered to have exceeded the contractual maximum of 15 classroom contact hours.

8) Courses, usually in English Composition, that are scheduled for 4 classroom hours but carry 3 credits will be counted for the purposes of establishing eligibility for professional hour pay as 4 hours. Thus an adjunct who teaches two such courses in a semester at a single college will receive a total of 9 hours pay per week: 8 for contact teaching hours and one additional professional hour.

9) Adjuncts who qualify for the paid professional hour and who do additional work that was previously paid at 60% of their normal teaching rate will be paid for the professional hour at 100% of their normal teaching rate and for the additional work at the 60% rate. Adjuncts who are not eligible for the professional hour but who do work normally paid at the 60% rate should continue to be paid at the 60% rate if they continue to perform this work.

10) The professional hour provision, because it is designed to provide compensation for work that is included in the normal full-time faculty position, does not apply to full-time instructional staff who teach a course as a multiple position.

11) The union and University have agreed that because of the immense value of one-on-one consultation for students, the normative use of the hour will be for office hours. However, if both the adjunct and the department chair agree, the hour may be used for other professional activities. A good test for the suitability of such activities is whether they would be appropriate for full-time faculty and whether they further the integration of adjuncts into the intellectual life of the college.

12) The University Bylaws state that the department chair shall "assign courses and arrange programs of instructional staff members of the department" (Section 9.3.a.2). The responsibility for arranging with the adjunct how to use the professional hour belongs to the department chair (or the chair's designee), rather than to the provost or other college official, just as the responsibility for arranging programs for full-timers belongs to the chair.

13) It is the union's position that the only acceptable "accountability mechanisms" for compliance with the professional hour requirements are those already in place for full-time faculty members. For example, if full-time faculty are required to post their office hours outside their office doors, then no more or less should be required of part-time faculty.



Igor Kopolnitsky

that is new, every PSC member should become a contract-implementation activist. It was a fight to win many of these issues at the bargaining table, and the culture of resistance to them was not eliminated by a stroke of the pen. Unless we actively enforce our new rights, management may violate them.

In the months since the agreement was signed, the union leadership has insisted that management meet with us to hammer out the details of implementation. Wherever possible, we've tried to work out differences in interpretation in advance, so members would not receive conflicting messages. The process has been productive, even if frustratingly slow. What's most important, however, is that you be equipped to know and assert your new rights yourselves. The guidelines below and in the articles to come are designed to give you that power.

DISTINGUISHED LECTURER

This is a new title, designed to allow the University to hire distinguished practitioners, teachers or scholars in any field for a position lasting not more than five years.

ple from the rich cultural and intellectual life of New York City, who might not be interested in a permanent teaching job.

The parameters of the position, as spelled out in the Memorandum of Agreement between CUNY and the PSC, are both straightforward and fairly elastic: the salary range is from the minimum of the current Lecturer schedule to the top of the Professor schedule; the workload is the same as for other professors in the college; the position is primarily focused on teaching but may include research; the individual cannot serve in the title for more than five years; and no more than 80 Distinguished Lecturers may be employed at any one time, throughout the City University.

A special opportunity this title presents is to expand the faculty's racial and ethnic diversity. Numerous studies show that a primary factor in recruiting outstanding new faculty of color is the presence of other

We must actively assert our new rights.

Coming next: reassigned time for untenured faculty, HEO Workload Committees, summer pay for department chairs.

CUNY & BERLUSCONI?

Honor our values

By MARTA PETRUSEWICZ
Hunter College & Graduate Center

In a letter to the Italian newspaper *Corriere della sera* (12 November), CUNY Chancellor Matthew Goldstein has confirmed his long-rumored intention to confer one of the University's highest honors upon Italy's prime minister, Silvio Berlusconi. The letter states that either a Chancellor's Medal or an honorary degree is possible. The motivation is Berlusconi's importance as an international figure and his support of the United States in the fight against terrorism. In addition, the proposal is presented as a welcome recognition of the fact that there are many of Italian heritage at CUNY among both teachers and students.

As an Italian academic and a scholar of Italian history, I urge the chancellor to reconsider. There are good reasons why the Italian prime minister should not be so honored – not only not by CUNY, but indeed by any university anywhere. The Italian academic community seems to take this view; it cannot be without significance that *no* Italian university has even suggested awarding Berlusconi any kind of recognition.

The main reservations about Berlusconi concern not rumors or opinions but specific criminal charges. He has been the subject of nine major criminal proceedings. Usually he has escaped sentencing because his team of more than 100 lawyers has been able to pro-

long trials in order to be able to invoke the statute of limitations. Even so, on various charges he has been found guilty and sentenced (with suspended sentences) to a total of six years and five months imprisonment. The principal charges against him are bribery of judges and politicians, salting away huge sums of unexplained funds in Switzerland and other tax havens, and systematic double bookkeeping with intent to defraud the tax authorities.

SCANDALOUS

Berlusconi's response to the various threats to his position has been a scandalous manipulation of the law in order to protect his private interests. When discussing his attitude to terrorism, it should be remembered that in September and October of last year, when the countries of Europe worked out an agreement to facilitate extradition and exchange of information to fight terrorism, Berlusconi refused to sign those particular clauses which, among everything else, would have given Italian magistrates easier access to Swiss documents concerning his own financial dealings. Here private interest clearly preceded public interest. It was hardly the action of a man in the forefront of the battle against terrorism.

On other fronts, self-interest has been equally evident. One of the first measures passed by the new Berlusconi government was the decriminalization of many forms of

false accounting and double bookkeeping. Interestingly enough this was made retroactive, in defiance of recognized principles of legislation. Paradoxically, recently enacted laws governing conflict of interest in Italy are to be activated only in the future, allowing Berlusconi to keep his hands on his personal media empire *and* control the state-run television and radio. This gives him near-total control over television, as several distinguished television journalists have learned at their cost when contracts were not renewed.

Berlusconi's contempt for freedom of the press is of a piece with his hostility to judicial independence. The prime minister and his supporters have launched a generalized attack on Italian magistrates, who are accused of political bias when they dare to question the tycoon's business methods.

Far from being confined to the political left, outrage at Berlusconi's conduct runs throughout a broad section of Italian society and above all its intelligentsia, including many respected figures from the center, the right and the apolitical. All are people who care deeply about the independence of the institutions of Italian civil society, who treasure open debate and critical thought.

Berlusconi burst onto the international stage with his crass reaction to the attacks of 9/11, when he affirmed the "superiority of our civilization" over that of Islam. Besides being false, this was said when all other

Western leaders were working to avoid the transformation of this event into a clash of cultures. As with Berlusconi's rejection of more transparency in banking, it must be asked: does this hurt terrorism, or help to fuel it? The foreign minister of Belgium declared that Berlusconi's ignorant statement "contradicts European values." Does it not contradict academic values as well?

ANTI-INTELLECTUAL

Berlusconi's remarks on Islam are among many that reflect his profoundly anti-intellectual and anti-cultural outlook. No one has been surprised that his government has drastically cut funding for universities in Italy, and for research in particular.

It is inconceivable that an institution like CUNY should want to honor these "values." To honor the Italian prime minister would be to *dishonor* the Italian academic community, which is wholeheartedly opposed to Berlusconi's anti-intellectual stance. It would be a slap in the face to CUNY's faculty as well: the University Faculty Senate's leadership has strongly opposed such a move.

As a friend of mine, a prominent Italian intellectual and president of a very prestigious Italian university wrote, "the only thing that universities have to sell is their fame and their dignity; once they have given away these they will never be able to buy them back." Giving an award to Berlusconi would be a grave mistake, one which would do lasting damage to CUNY's high international reputation.

Marta Petrusiewicz earned her Ph.D. at the University of Bologna. She is Associate Professor of History at Hunter College and the Graduate Center.

A NEW NEW DEAL

New York's public interest

By MIKE WALLACE

Tax cutters love to say that they are simply giving us back our money to spend as we wish. But that is to overlook the fact that many of the things we most wish for can't be provided through the market. You can't buy public health, or mass transit, or a clean environment, or a competent military at the nearest Wal-Mart.

The New Deal and WWII years created the infrastructure on which much late twentieth-century prosperity was erected. We've long been living off our parents' and grandparents' collective achievements; worse, under the blandishments of privateers, we've allowed the physical and social matrix we inherited to decay, or refused to modernize it. It must now be refurbished and brought up-

to-date, just as privately invested capital is routinely. That will require substantial federal spending, which can't be done if our common wealth is scattered to the winds.

The New Deal was far from perfect and it's far from being the only template available for progressive reform. What's appealing about the New Deal, however, are its deep roots in our own city's history, the range and scope of its ambition, its awareness of the interconnectedness of problems that we nowadays tend to treat as discrete single-issue entities, and the inventiveness and durability of many of its solutions.

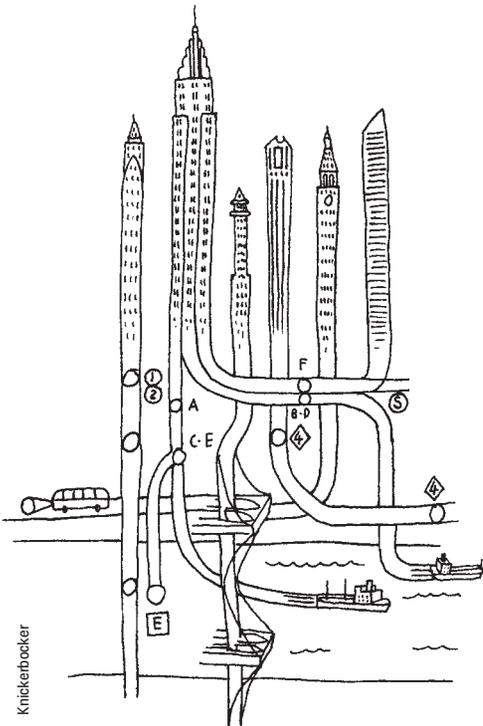
Under the New Deal in New York City, WPA workers built public amenities that allowed millions of New Yorkers access to benefits not available to them even in the prosperous twenties. The New Dealers refurbished and expanded 287 parks (including

Jacob Riis and Mount Morris) and laid out 400 additional ones. They built 17 municipal swimming pools, Orchard Beach in the Bronx, the 20,000-seat Randalls Island stadium, a new zoo in Central Park, and 255 playgrounds in residential neighborhoods.

To enhance public health care, the WPA built Queens General Hospital, repaired Harlem Hospital, established the city's first clinic to detect and treat outpatients for venereal disease, and started two score baby health stations in dozens of neighborhoods. To ease an education space crisis (classes of 40-50 students were common), the program renovated and built hundreds of schools, and did major work on Brooklyn College and Hunter (now Lehman) College. In integrated public housing campaigns, the WPA, PWA and New York City Housing Authority demolished thousands of slum buildings and replaced them with projects like the Williamsburg and Harlem River Houses.

While we should by no means limit ourselves to replicating the New Deal's successes – hard to do in any event given its contradictory character and its genesis in a specific historical moment – it is a chapter eminently worthy of revisiting as we chart our course in the years ahead.

Mike Wallace is professor of history at John Jay and the Graduate Center. Adapted from his A New Deal for New York (Bell & Weiland, 2002).



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Contingent labor meets

By VINNIE TIRELLI
Brooklyn College

A participant's report

Having been to all five conferences of the Coalition of Contingent Academic Labor (COCAL), I found COCAL V to be the most exciting and promising of them all.

COCAL V, held October 4-6 in Montréal, was the best attended by far. The 225 participants included academic labor activists from as far as Alaska, from all across Canada and the U.S., as well as Mexico. The growth in part-time, adjunct instructional staff at CUNY is part of an expansion of contingent academic labor throughout North America. Looking around the conference hall, it was clear that our local labor organizing is part of an international social movement.

A COCAL first was the multi-campus protest march in which we all took part, with local activists giving rousing speeches and with entertainment at each stop. Carrying signs and chanting in French and in English, we went from Concordia University to the Science Center of the University of Québec at Montréal (UQAM) to CEGEP du Vieux-Montréal (a two-year college), where a rally featured music, balloons, and circus performers. The march ended at UQAM's other cam-

pus, where a reception welcomed us to town.

This was also the first multilingual COCAL; our hosts provided us with translation through wireless headphones so we could all follow the proceedings. It was inspiring to witness the level of organization among our Canadian colleagues. The contacts and relationships between the French- and

New contacts and friendships laying the basis for a stronger alliance

English-speaking Canadians were not as strong as I had assumed, but one of COCAL V's major accomplishments was to bring them closer together, with new contacts and friendships laying the basis for a stronger alliance

in the future. And for the first time we had representatives from Mexico's Sindicato de Trabajadores de la Universidad Autónoma de México (STUNAM), who discussed our common problems and pledged to be actively involved in future COCAL meetings.

Linda Sperling, of British Columbia's College Institute Educators Association, set the tone early in the conference when she noted that it is easier to be against something than to be for something. But to

have a lasting impact, she said, we need to articulate a positive social vision along with our particular demands.

Rich Moser of the AAUP proposed that what contingent faculty are fighting for is academic citizenship, freedom and democracy. In a plenary on academic freedom, Alissa Messer of the California Federation of Teachers Community Col-

lege Council pointed out how these issues are related. Without job security for part-time faculty, she argued, there is no academic freedom. Messer said there is a "chilling" effect on scholarship and learning when adjunct faculty find it necessary to "stop and think twice" when engaged in any kind of public speaking, or even when deciding what books to place on a reading list.

Academic freedom plays an important role in protecting open debate in the larger society, Messer said. But with half the faculty in



Hélène Boivin, a vice president of the part-time faculty union at the University of Montréal, at COCAL V

North America in part-time positions, she told the conference, our lack of job security weakens democracy outside the campus as well.

The conference adopted a trilingual statement, the "Montréal Declaration," on the need to end "the exploitation generated by contingency." It expressed our commitment to organize for "the recognition of our contribution to quality education, and to improve our working conditions." There was broad agreement that COCAL should remain, for now, a loosely structured grassroots movement with a global perspective.

CHICAGO NEXT TIME

We made plans to follow up on last year's successful Campus Equity Week with another coordinated effort in the Spring of 2003. Finally, we decided to hold COCAL VI in Chicago in approximately 18 months. A key reason for choosing Chicago is that Midwestern academic unions have had more difficulty in organizing part-time faculty than their sisters and brothers on the West Coast and in the Northeast, and COCAL VI can help to shine a light on these campaigns. There was also interest in holding a COCAL conference in Mexico in the near future.

There was such a good feeling to the entire weekend: three days of working in solidarity with activists and teachers from across the continent left me feeling stronger. One participant described what we were doing by turning the name of our coalition into a verb: "We must continue COCAL-ing." Everyone seemed to agree.

Transit worker contract fight

By JOSHUA B. FREEMAN
Queens College

Union opposes fare increase

The contract between the New York City Transit Authority and Transport Workers Union Local 100 expires December 15. Though New York's Taylor Law bans strikes by public employees, Local 100 President Roger Toussaint has refused to rule out the possibility of a walkout.

Several issues stand out among the long list of demands put forth by the bus and subway workers' union. Without specifying a figure, Local 100 has asked for a "substantial" wage increase, arguing that its members are paid less than workers who hold equivalent jobs with the Port Authority, Metro North and the Long Island Rail Road.

HEALTH BENEFITS

The union also is seeking full funding for its Health Benefit Trust. Like the PSC's Welfare Fund, the Health Benefit Trust has developed a growing deficit as a result of rising costs and insufficient employer pay-

ments. And for transit workers, this is an even bigger problem: the Trust provides *all* of their health insurance, unlike CUNY employees who get basic health insurance from the City and supplementary benefits from the Welfare Fund.

A strike has not been ruled out by TWU leaders.

Among non-monetary demands, modifications in grievance and discipline procedures are at the top of the list. Transit workers are plagued by frequent and harsh disciplinary actions and a grievance procedure that is stacked heavily against them. Other demands include ending the use of workfare participants to perform transit work (transferring those currently at the TA to permanent transit jobs), and better safety measures after two track workers were killed in November.

The upcoming contract is the first to be negotiated by Local 100's new leadership, which ousted the incum-

bent administration in November 2000. Since then, the union has worked relentlessly to mobilize its membership, building an extensive shop steward system and holding a series of mass rallies. At the most recent, on October 30, police initially tried to block 16,000 TWU members from marching to Gov. Pataki's office in midtown Manhattan, despite the fact that the union had obtained a permit.

PUBLIC SUPPORT

Local 100 has sought alliances with the public, working with neighborhood organizations to stop the TA from closing token booths and subway station entrances. More recently the union has been part of a "Save the Fare" coalition with community and political groups, mass transit advocates, and other unions opposed to a post-election fare hike. Raising subway and bus fares would be "in effect a regressive tax hike on working

people," says Local 100's Toussaint.

Structurally, transit workers are in a similar position to PSC members: although public employees, they are not directly employed by either the state or the city, but work for an agency dependent on funding from both. Over the years, transit worker contracts generally have not followed the pattern established by other municipal unions. Because of TWU's history of militancy and the critical nature of transit workers' jobs, they have often won better contracts than other public employees. TWU settlements have provided a general context and benchmark for subsequent union negotiations.

"As mass transit users, unionists, and public employees, PSC members have a strong interest in providing all the support we can to the transit workers in their current struggle," said PSC Treasurer John Hyland. PSC members who would like to join in support actions should e-mail Jim Perlstein of the PSC Solidarity Committee at jperlstein@aol.com, or call Hyland in the PSC office at 212-354-1252.



15-MINUTE ACTIVIST

Pass it on

Once you've finished reading this issue of *Clarion*, give it to one of your students. When Gov. Pataki announces that he wants to raise CUNY students' tuition, they'll be upset – but they may not know what they can do about it. The news story on page 5 tells who they can call.

Let students know that the PSC is against raising CUNY's tuition. Stopping tuition hikes and cuts to CUNY's budget will require an all-out effort of students, faculty and staff together. The articles inside (pp. 6-7) analyze our common interests, and why a tuition hike would be bad news for all.

Imagine if 1,000 PSC members gave this issue of *Clarion* to a CUNY student! It would be 1,000 small steps that help bring students and the union closer together. And in the days ahead, one thing is for sure: we're going to need each other.