What’s behind the decline?

More immigrants moved to NYC in the ‘90s – but students studying English as a Second Language are disappearing from CUNY’s senior colleges.

Health plan deadline

If you want to change your health insurance plan, the deadline is October 31. Plus news about new benefits for prescription drugs and mental health.

Arrests dismissed

As students and faculty grapple with curriculum issues, Hostos College officials try to repeal the First Amendment. A judge says it’s still in effect.

Four by Kimiko Hahn

Four poems from different times and places by Kimiko Hahn, professor of English at Queens College and Clarion’s new poetry editor.
Checks out but phone lines down

WTC disaster affects TRS

The Teachers’ Retirement System (TRS), based in lower Manhattan, was closed for over a week after the destruction of the World Trade Center. September checks were mailed out on time but had to be based on August amounts. Adjustments will be made in October. Cost-of-living increases due in September could not be included and will be paid retroactively in October.

TRS office phone lines were still out of service when Clarion went to press. TRS has set up a small number of phones off-site, at 1-888-592-TRSR, but this temporary phone center has no access to individual records.

The best way to do business with TRS by phone. Send forms by certified mail to TRS, 40 Worth St., NY, NY 10013, and the postmark will be honored as the date received. You can find forms to print or more information on the TRS Web site at www.trs.nyc.ny.us. (If you’re not used to using the Web, ask for help at your public library.) You can also visit the TRS office in person, at 40 Worth Street between Church and West Broadway. Be sure to bring your identification.

If you need emergency help with a TRS pension, call Clarissa Gilbert Weiss at the PSC Central Office at 212-154-1323 – (PH)

Distance learning at CUNY is not for profit

Distance learning at CUNY is not for profit

The recent postcard campaign raised morale and taught students about the governing conditions of their lives and education. The charge to “write your congressmen” has a firm hold on the American political imagination. So the public and the politicians can see that we took the prescribed steps in acting as a constituency.

But is this enough? Our leadership and the members have to amplify our recent efforts. Suggestions: an advertising campaign with photographs showing the PSC at work “educating” the politicians about the state of our university, and continued pressure on media outlets to cover aspects of our struggle to rebuild CUNY. Clearly the politicians – Pataki, Bruno, and Silver – demonstrate remarkable cynicism in their budget “games.”

The PSC must appeal to people over the heads of such politicians. Writing your congressman is only one way to voice our needs and represent our values. Today’s forms of political expression are often compromises. We can offset this by using a wide variety of approaches: a public voice with many registers and many tones.

– Charles Malesolves, Queens College

Looking good

The new Clarion is well down the right road: attractive, readable, substantive, focused and open to contention. You’ve struck a nice balance between Big Ideas and the Nitty-Gritty. Keep it up!

– Jim Portoin, BMCC

Congratulations

Congratulations on the transfor- mation of Clarion. It’s not only lively and attractive but serves to maintain the spirit of militancy and democratic participation – both so necessary for a union.

– Israel Kugler, PSC Deputy President Emeritus

Worth defending

Ashes are still smoldering over the former World Trade Center, ashes that include the incinerated remains of people who had lived, loved, worked, and studied in this city of which we are so proud. Wounded to the core, we have risen to hold and help each other.

At the same time, we are asked to mobilize to defend our way of life. But this involves sometimes contradictory things. For workers, the call to patriotism seems to mean taking their pink slips of unemployment directly to the malls to exhibit consumer confidence. For those still employed, there are calls for austerity, while CEOs con-tinue to claim large bonuses. Air- lines are bailed out, but schools re- main underfunded.

Our union must resist falling in to the trap of such hypocrisy. It is not selfish to demand a decent con- tract. It is fair to us, and it is a ser- vice to the children of the stricken population of New York. Enhance- ning the public sector and distribut- ing wealth more fairly is a way of life worth defending, both at home and abroad. In the end, it will de- feat our enemies better than any other means.

– Renate Bridenthal, Brooklyn College

US not at fault

After the September 11 tragedy, I feel not only profound sympathy for the victims but also moral out- rage at such profoundly criminal acts. For anyone to attempt to hold the US responsible is to per- petuate the damage the attacks themselves inaugurated. It is also to demonstrate a deep lack of understanding for the com- plex forces and motivations that work behind every conflict and act in this particular. This is not just an instance of class warfare, or fear of globalization, or tipped pride. What drove the hijackers is a complex stew of historical cir- cumstances, infernal political in- stincts, and a religious bigotry that embroils all socioeconomic layers and many minorities. Furthermore, to hold the US responsible is to infantilize the ter- rorists themselves. There is an im- susceptible smugness in thinking that we alone are capable of being responsible for our actions while the “Third World terrorist is not. In a curious way, to bring those re- sponsible to justice is to treat them with greater respect than is any at- tempt to lay blame on the US. It is one thing to attempt to understand motivation and another to assess blame. The hijackers and their protectors deserve the blame even as we attempt to understand their place in the world.

– Michael Burnhart, Kingsborough

Everyday people

As we mourn the dead from the terrorist attacks on the WTC and the Pentagon, we must neverthe- less take stock of the continual vic- timization of workers throughout the world and the retreat of the secular welfare state.

The attack may heighten neglect among those in the U.S. and abroad who create, construct, and maintain the industries, farms and services – everyday people who punch the clock and answer the bell. At the same time, this terror- ist attack and the resultant counter-terrorism will further weaken the nation-states’ respon- sibilities for the health, education and welfare of their peoples. As we seek to respond, we will move ever further from our democratic and social welfare principles that emerged from the Great Depres- sion and World War II. Govern- ments and legislatures will become further colonized by employer de- mands, fundamentalist critiques, and war-making budgets.

We must defend the role of a secular state, independent from the uncompromising claims of cor- porate interests and the siren song of corporate welfare. Academic la- bour must work for a state that acts as a trustee for the nameless peo- ple who create the wealth that is defended on their behalf, but for which they are increasingly uncompensated and unrelated.

– Peter Ranis, York College & Graduate Center

For peace

Montant is beautiful in the early morning. But when I jog on the beach I see the fish that recreation- al anglers have just caught. The fish lie on the sand, gasping for oxygen. The commercial fishing boats go out to sea, a picturesque sight. But many of the boats use longlines, fishing lines that are 20 to 30 miles long with hundreds of baited hooks. The crews retrieve the fish they are after and discard the rest. Longlines are used around the world, depleting entire fish populations.

During Iraq’s war with Iran, Saddam Hussein used poison gas on his own people. We supported Iraq but sold arms to both sides. When we fought Saddam, he killed people and wildlife with huge fires and oil spills. We shot our retreat- ing soldiers in the back.

Terrorists have killed thou- sands of New Yorkers. We mourn, and we go after the likely culprits, Osama bin Laden, whom we trained to fight Russia. It’s not yet clear what our other targets will be.

Coalitions, true, but the killing goes on and on. Fish, mammals, trees, humans – it doesn’t seem to matter. It’s as if killing has a mind of its own. It’s time to work for peace.

– Bill Crais, City College

Write to Clarion

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

By PETER HOGNESS

Any reckoning of how CUNY was affected by the World Trade Center disaster must start with the human toll. The stories came slowly, one per son at a time. A BEO at John Jay who lost his son, a firefighter like himself. A computer science student from LaGuardia, who died while working at his job at Cantor Fitzgerald. A lawyer who worked as a con tinuing education professor at Baruch. Eighty-one alumni, former and current students from the College of Staten Island, 111 from John Jay. The University was still adding up its loss a month after the disaster. "We need not await the final tally of death and destruction," said Trustee Bennno Schmidt. 'To know that the City University of New York has suffered the greatest loss of life within its academic family from a single cataclysm of any university in American history." Less tragic but still shocking was the physical effect on CUNY’s build ings. Fiterman Hall, home to the CUNY Research Foundation (see page 10 and 39 BMCC classrooms, was damaged when WTC Number Seven collapsed. Large chunks were torn away from its façade, and sever al stories of debris were piled up torn away from its façade, and se veral stories of debris were piled up from – ran in and said to get out in every story. I didn’t know what to do. I came up to him and grabbed him just like I’d done to my student, to calm him down, and it did a little but he was still really upset. I didn’t know what to say. Afterwards I called a few more phone numbers. I gave them the number for the counseling center, and she called me back. They were shaken up and didn’t mind talking about it. Since then we’ve gone back to nor mal and there’s always a point at which we almost automatically go back to that. And what they think about what’s happening in the US, and in the world.

I feel sort of helpless about a lot of what’s probably going to happen. The premise of my book was the idea of a group of Muslins radicals trying to draw America into a protracted war in the Middle East, thereby strengthening the hand of the radi cal in that part of the world. This is a real possibility. 

Salar Abdoh

Entire University is affected

September 11 has changed Fried helm’s plans for the rest of his course: “It’s on early American his tory, and I’ve decided to spend much more time on our founding docu ments and the tension between free dom and order.”

All in all, the re-opening of BMCC was something of a minor miracle. Surplus equipment was donated by colleges and universities as far away as Kalasamoo, Michigan and Normal, Illinois. BMCC staff worked with volunteers from unions in the building trades to build over a dozen new classrooms in a few days’ time to replace the space that was lost in Fiterman Hall. On opening day fac ulty and staff greeted students at the subway, handing out maps di recting them to the one entrance that was open.

“Every single person at BMCC said how glad they were to be back,” commented FSC Associate Execu tive Director Mary Ann Carlise. “You could see what CUNY meant to our community, how important it is to continue the work we do.”

Salar Abdoh is an adjunct in the English Department at BMCC. He came to the US from Iran with his father at the age of 14. His mother, sister and a younger brother live in Iran. Abdoh spoke with Clarion in Occ tober. He is the author of The Poet Game, published in 1999 — a novel about an agent of the Iranian secret service who attempts to prevent a second attack on the World Trade Center. At 8:45 am on September 11, Abdoh was teaching in the BMCC annex in Fiterman Hall – across the street from WTC Number Seven.

There was a very loud noise, but not so loud you’d think something had blown up. You hear loud noises a lot in New York City. We couldn’t see much out the window. We saw paper being blown down the street, but it didn’t register. Then a very hara ssed looking man – I don’t know where he came from – ran in and said to get out in the street. It was very crowded outside and I lost track of about half of my stu dents. When we saw people falling, that’s when some students really started to lose it. They just started weeping. One student, I just physi cally turned her around, put her head on my shoulder so she wouldn’t see any more. Almost as soon as I did that the second plane hit. When we saw the ball of flame, I knew what had hap pened. I felt strangely self-con scious: “You have come to live in the time of your own fiction.”

After the flame came, the force of that explosion made windows start to burst all around. That’s when people got really scared and every one started to run. I lost my eye glasses in the mayhem. I was going north on West Broad way when the first tower fell. I have no words to describe it. This lanky cab driver, an African man, was screaming to the heavens. “Jesus why have you done this to us?” Just screaming, over and over, I thought he was going to have a heart attack. I went up to him and grabbed him just like I’d done to my student, to calm him down, and it did a little but he was still really upset. I didn’t know what to do. I came home and there were all these calls and everyone was glued to the TV. A couple of days later some stu dents began to call me to tell me our situation. They called a few more who’d been with me that day. Two ended up hospitalized for trauma. One basically had a nervous break down. She can’t leave her apart ment, much less come to the city. I had one former student from Israel call. All she did was weep. I didn’t know what to say. Afterwards I found myself yelling at the wall. “God, I’m not trained to deal with that” I called Ruth Mushof, vice chair of the department, and she gave me the number for the coun seling department.

The first class after we came back, we only talked about what happened. They were shaken up and didn’t mind talking about it. Since then we’ve gone back to nor mal but there’s always a point at which we almost automatically go back to that. And what they think about what’s happening in the US, and in the world.

I feel sort of helpless about a lot of what’s probably going to happen. The premise of my book was the idea of a group of Muslins radicals trying to draw America into a protracted war in the Middle East, thereby strengthening the hand of the rad ical in that part of the world. This is a real possibility. 

Imam Sheik Ahmed Dewidar (left) and Rabbi Ian Azizolaholf (right) talk after memorial at Baruch. Dewidar’s assistant is at center.

NEWS
PSC leadership and members respond to disaster
Solidarity with others, action on CUNY problems

BY PETER HOGNESS

Like everyone else in New York City, PSC members and staff at first responded to the terrorist attack of September 11 with shock and disbelief. But the union moved quickly to support those who had been most directly hurt, and to protect its members in the days that followed.

The union and management worked together to solve some tough problems under difficult conditions,” said PSC President Barbara Bowen.

The PSC made an immediate contribution to the NYC Central Labor Council’s relief fund, and decided to set up its own fund as well. A resolution at the September Delegate Assembly (DA) expressed the union’s sorrow and solidarity with those who had lost people they loved.

Many members and staff volunteered for relief efforts. An appeal on a PSC e-mail group led Debra Bergen, Director of Contract Administration, to work at a Labor Council telephone hotline. The hotline (212-806-0000) connects people with the services they need, such as a woman Bergen spoke with whose health insurance was in danger after her husband was thrown out of work by the disaster. (Call the same number to volunteer.)

Steve Dauz and David Gecchil of LaGuardia’s Mentoring Program worked at a Red Cross shelter in Chinatown. The shelter provided food, showers, a place to stay — and dust masks. “The cloud of smoke was still too thick, people came to us begging for masks,” said Gecchil. “Some people had not had time to pick up walkie talkies, purses or any necessities.”

In response to a request from the Uniformed Fire Officers Association, PSC staff identified members with counseling skills who could help surviving family members. The PSC also shared its office space with staff from DC 37, the city workers’ union representing many CUNY employees, who were displaced from DC 37’s headquarters on Bar- clay Street.

At the same time, the PSC was taking care of its basic responsibilities as a union. “In the face of such grief, anything else can seem triv- ial,” said Bowen. “But we wanted to make sure none of our members suf- fered additional stress from loss of income.”

The PSC negotiated with CUNY management to guarantee that no one would be penalized because of inability to get to work in the days immediately after the tragedy, and that BMCC and Research Foundation employees got their paychecks on time. Union and management worked out a revised academic cal- endar for BMCC, which allows the semester to end before December 31.

Information was critically impor- tant in the wake of September 11 and often hard to come by. “The PSC Web site became a centralized source of CUNY-related informa- tion,” on classes, closings, re-open- ings, counseling, paychecks, emer- gency data, vigils, teach-ins and rel- ieve efforts,” said union Webmaster Bill Friedheim of BMCC. Informa- tion on the Web site (www.psc- cuny.org) was sometimes updated two or three times a day.

Union health-and-safety officers and chapter activists made sure that air quality was carefully inspected before the re-openings of BMCC and the Centers for Worker Education on Hudson Street. Asbestos levels inside these buildings and on the streets were found to be within fed- eral safety limits, and BMCC was re- opened as scheduled on October 1.

In recent days, however, those who have attempted to engage in this line of defense have come un- der attack. Accusations of anti- Americanism, anti-Semitism, anti- Islamism, and even appeasement and sedition have been foisted on them for seeking insight, for stop- ping and thinking, because that ac- tivity is alleged to be contrary to the sentiment of real outrage, contrary to the primacy of collective healing in the face of b醚ravement, contrary to the need for real security, con- trary to the sentiment of even gen- uine patriotism. But the pursuit of reasons and critical insight into all the dimensions of this crisis is not necessarily at odds with any of these sentiments. Critical inquiry must go hand-in-hand with feeling, to better guide understanding of what is now swirling around us.

To accede to such accusations is to accede to the criminalization of one’s views and to accept the role of a defendant submitting proof for the harmless and innocuous character of them. Pushed into the role of “the accuser,” the efforts to which we are essential, particularly in these times, come to a standstill.

We should not be in the business of criminalizing ideas, especially those of colleagues with whom we may disagree.

Tonight the PSC provides a forum for us to do what we do best — en- gage historical knowledge and em- brace critical thought in order to broaden the public discussion and develop an informed analysis about issues surrounding September 11 and its aftermath.

“A chance to stop and think…”

On October 3, the PSC sponsored a forum on the WTC disaster. Speak- ers included Jed Abrahamian, dis- tinguished professor of history at Baruch; Corey Robin, professor of political science at Brooklyn; Alisa Solomon, professor of journalism at Baruch, and William Fabel, profes- sor of economics at Queens.

The forum also provided an op- portunity to share approaches to teaching, with members invited to bring copies of materials being used in their classrooms.

Below are excerpts from the intro- duction by Frank Kirkland, chair of the Philosophy Department at Hunter, who served as moderator. Full text available from firkl@nyc.lshu.hunter.cuny.edu.

This evening the Professional Staff Congress offers us a special op- portunity to take a collective breath, to speak candidly yet reasonably among ourselves about issues ema- nating from the events of September 11, 2001 and their aftermath. It pro- vides an opportunity to find insight, along the continuous efforts to find survivors and bodies. It pro- vides a chance to stop and think while sustaining hope and damping fear.

None of this is to suggest that we are alone in our concern with the heroic efforts of our brethren at “Ground Zero” or with the complex security efforts of our brethren responsible for public safe- ty. At the same time, however, I do not believe intellectuals and teach- ers must submit to the city’s and CUNY’s characterization of faculty and staff as “non-essential person- nel,” which I have seen in official New York City and CUNY docu- ments and pronouncements of re- cent weeks.

ESSENTIAL ROLE

If anything, as the American real- ity fully bears the features of a “work in progress,” this is a time for the active creation, not just the pro- tection, of peace and public safety.

As intellectuals and teachers, we are essential to that effort. As the nation’s security concerns rise to inordinate levels of paranoia, this is a time for institutions to be more respectful of hu- man life. As intellectuals and teach- ers, we are essential to that effort.

As political leaders are subject to intimidation and violence” (see page 12).

In the face of such an inhuman response on October 3, on the attack of September 11 and its aftermath (see left). “As an academic union,” said Executive Council member Nancy Homer, “we have a special responsi- bility to provide a forum for analysis of what has happened.”

To make a donation to the PSC’s relief fund, call Treasurer John Hyland at 212-354-1525.
State budget picture uncertain

WTC disaster affects negotiations

By MICHAEL LUMELSKY

Negotiations over the New York State budget are in disaster after the World Trade Center disaster, and the prospect of winning new resources for CUNY is now uncertain. In early August, Republican Sen- ator Majority Leader Joseph Bruno and Democratic Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver joined forces to pass a so-called “bare-bones” budget – a version of Governor Pataki’s own proposal that cut state spending to just $1 billion less than last year. The Legislature had hoped to focus pub- lic discontent on the governor and thus force him to accept a supple- mental budget with a higher level of spending.

This stripped-down budget in- cludes less money for CUNY than the University received last year. In response, the PSC launched a post- card campaign urging Bruno, Silver and Pataki to give CUNY the re- sources it needs. Over 50,000 post- cards signed by faculty, staff and students were sent to the capital in Albany, more than twice as many as the union’s target. Thirty-seven thousand were personally delivered to Albany in a PSC lobbying visit on September 10.

At BMCC alone, PSC members collected 6,500 signed postcards. “We just couldn’t give faculty enough cards to give out,” said the vice chair of the PSC chapter, Bill Frenschke. “This was despite the logi- cal problems of starting a post- card campaign on August 27 – the first day of classes. But faculty, staff and students fully understand the situation that the university system is in.”

As at other campuses, a majority of the cards at BMCC were signed by students. “This shows the power of the alliance with students that we started to build last year, with Teach CUNY,” said PSC Secretary Cecelia McCall. “Those cards rep-resented a lot of votes.

Though the Legislature’s high- stakes competition with Pataki made all calculations uncertain, the odds looked good for winning supple- mental state funding for CUNY and the state’s political landscape was transformed by the terrorist at- tack on September 11. The Legisla- ture immediately gave up on one of its main tactics in pressuring Pataki: withholding all of the “reappropri- ations” from last year’s budget.

Spending bills often include au- thorization for funds to be used one or two years in the future; this mon- ey must be reauthorized each year or it cannot be spent. The “bare- bones” budget did not include any reappropriations, and in many cas- es these funds would have evapo- rated if not reauthorized by Sep- tember 15. After the overwhelming losses on September 11, no one wanted to play “chicken” with vital programs, and the Legislature passed the reappropriations with- out dissent.

With state revenue projections in- clear whether or not a supplemen- tal budget will be adopt- ed. If a supplemental budget is passed, it will not be as generous as it might have been a few weeks ago,” said McCall. “Bruno and Silver took a gamble with the governor, and he called their bluff. We have said all along that the budget process should be more than three people in a room trying to agree on a revenue figure, and this shows the worst of what can happen.”

CUNY Chancellor Matthew Gold- stein had planned CUNY’s initial spending for the Fall semester on the assumption that the state would pass some sort of supplemental ap- propriation. At present, the univer- sity is therefore running on a “defi- ciency budget,” said Goldstein – spending money it doesn’t have. But CUNY management is not yet re- sorting to spending cuts, as the Leg- islature has not closed the door on this year’s budget. Goldstein has said he expects to find the money to cover all hiring commitments, and that existing searches should con- tinue.

“The union is still pushing as hard as we can for a supplemental bud- get,” said PSC Vice President Steve London. “When the Legislature re- convenes in mid-October, we will be there. But whatever happens this year, within a month we will have to start working to shape next year’s spending plan.”

“The PSC knew from the start that this would be a multi-year process,” said London. “Even if we don’t get new full-time lines and oth- er items this year, we have gained enough political capital to get them in 2002.” To win more funds for CUNY, London said, “we have to be in it for the long haul.”

PSC and RF CUNY return to table

By DEBRA BERGEN

PSC Directive of Contract Administration

After the September 11 attack on the World Trade Center, the build- ing that held the CUNY Research Foundation (RF-CUNY) was severe- ly damaged and was declared struc- turally unsound, and may have to be torn down (see page 3). While every RF staff member is safe, the RF’s PSC chapter, formed and joined the struggle for RF’s rights.

Obviously these events put RF’s on their backs,RF’s last bargaining session in its new loca- tion: at 555 West 57th Street, 11th floor. For all kinds of reasons, RF employees were glad to be there. Many said it was a relief to start get- ting back to normal, after all they had been through.

“The WTC was just so hard to get back to normal, after all they had been through.”

“The WTC was just so hard to get back to normal, after all they had been through.”

On the other hand, RF’s previous workplace needed a new home. “It was just so hard to start working from home,” said one RF staff member on her first day back. Work had not stopped just because the RF offices were closed. RF-funded research throughout CUNY was still going on, and there were thousands of salaries to be paid. Off-site comput- er backup meant that the informa- tion was there, but dozens of people had to figure out how to get the job done with access to anything that had been in those offices.

Obviously these events put RF’s agenda on hold. The union and the Foundation plan to get back to hammering out a new labor agreement in mid- October.

Since the start of the RF negoci- ations in February 2001, the union has secured tentative agreement on several non-economic demands, including the Foundation’s ini- tial refusal to hold any bargaining sessions at the PSC office. While some progress has been made, nego- tiations have often been difficult. Like CUNY’s management at 80th Street, RF officials are trying to impose a corporate model of man- agement and the Foundation’s pro- posals ask that the union make too many concessions. The Foundation wants to eliminate the entire disci- plinary process from the union contract, and wants to remove ten titles from the bargaining unit. They also want givebacks in sick leave accruals and a doctor’s note for even a one-day absence. RF management has not offered any economic pro- posal. (A full list of both the PSC’s demands and the Foundation’s proposals is available on the Web at www.psc.cuny.org.)

In an important demonstration of solidarity, PSC chapter chairs sent a joint letter to RF Executive Director Nina Peyser last spring to express their support for the RF-PSC bar- gaining team. It was a strong mes- sage to send to RF management, showing that the RF’s PSC chapter has the backing of researchers that the Foundation is supposed to serve.

The spring and summer brought several months of tough negotia- tions. At the last bargaining session of the summer, the union and the Foundation reached tentative agree- ment on some of the PSC’s im- portant time-and-leave demands concerning bereavement leave and an appeal process when an annual leave request is denied. There is al- so tentative agreement on improve- ments in the evaluation process. All tentative agreements, of course, are subject to conclusion of an overall agreement and ratifica- tion by the RF’s PSC membership.

“When negotiations resuming, we hope that will be soon,” said PSC Ex- ecutive Director Deblith Bell. “In spite of the dislocations caused by September 11, we hope the attitude of RF management will be positive.”

Small fraction of the 50,000 postcards collected by the PSC.

The PSC’s ongoing efforts to bring part-timers into the union and to nego- tiate aggressively on their behalf are part of a larger national and even international movement.

From October 28 to November 3, that movement will organize concerted activities on campuses all over the country. The PSC’s cam- paign dubbed “Campus Equity Week.”

“This week, part-timer issues will take the national stage,” said Mary Ann Carlise, the PSC’s director of organizing.

“Campus Equity Week is part of a long history of long-standing union or- ganizing efforts at the college level by the organizers. “For the past two decades, faculty in the US and Cana- da have struggled to organize local unions and have their issues ad- dressed in collective bargaining. Through a series of conferences, in- ternet networks and growing support from faculty organizations, a leadership dedicated to building an international movement of contin- gent faculty has emerged.” This broad movement has organized Campus Equity Week around two simple messages: teachers’ working conditions are students’ learning conditions, and equal work deserves equal pay.

Already, nearly thirty local un- ion – organizations have signed on as sponsors and en- dorsee, including the PSC and its national affiliate, the American Fed- eration of Teachers.

The PSC, a leader in organizing part-time faculty, is organizing two main events. On Tuesday, October 30, a panel discussion on “Adjunct Equity in the University” will be held at the CUNY Graduate Center (see “Calendar” on page 6). Speakers will include Rich Moser, of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), who testified at the March 9 legislative hearing on securing un- employment and disability benefits for adjuncts; PSC Community Col- lege Officer Ingrid Hughes, an ad- joint at BMCC and a leader in the PSC’s “Strength in Numbers” cam- paign, PSC President Barbara Bowen, and adjunct activists from other universities.

November 3 has been declared “Adjunct Equity Day,” and a CUNY- wide cultural event will be hosted at BMCC. Music, poetry and perfor- mance work by adjuncts will give voice to the need for equal treat- ment for part-timers. “Everyone’s invited,” said the PSC’s “Equity in Numbers” cam- paign.

PSC President Barbara Bowen, and adjunct activists from other universities.

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Union demands negotiations

PSC files to stop RRI awards

By STEVE LONDON
PSC First Vice President

In our contract negotiations, the PSC has been pressing for higher, more competitive salaries across the board while CUNY's salary demands focus on management discretion. In violation of the contract and New York State's Taylor Law, CUNY is now attempting to unilaterally impose one of its two main salary demands: discretionary compensation above established maximums. The PSC has been forced to act.

The PSC filed a grievance on July 2, 2001, to stop CUNY management from violating the contract by continuing to award Recruitment/Retention Initiative (RRI) compensation to CUNY instructional staff past the agreed upon end date.

Typically, RRI compensation augments salary by adding $10,000 or $20,000 “above the maximums specified in the salary schedules for disciplines experiencing serious difficulties in recruitment and/or retention of highly qualified personnel.”

In 1998, the PSC and CUNY agreed, as part of the last round of contract negotiations, to allow management to award up to 100 RRIs during a two-year period. The June 25, 1998 Letter of Agreement said that the RRI vision “will expire on July 30, 2000, unless renewed by the parties.”

In the two years the agreement was operative, the CUNY Board of Trustees approved approximately 40 RRIs. Since the end of the agreement, about 34 additional RRIs have been awarded. It is these additional RRIs and any more CUNY is contemplating awarding that the union is concerned about.

The PSC learned this summer that management continued to give out RRIs in violation of the agreed upon end date. CUNY management made no attempt to inform the PSC they wished to renew the RRI agreement. In fact, CUNY included a RRI-type stipend as one of its current bargaining demands - leading the union to believe that CUNY wished to negotiate the RRI as part of this round of bargaining. In the union’s opinion, CUNY management is violating New York State’s Taylor law in its attempt to bargain individualized with members of the bargaining unit and to unilaterally impose one of its bargaining demands.

The PSC supports retention and retention of the highest caliber faculty for CUNY. In our current collective bargaining with the management, the union is seeking significant salary increases, including increases at the top of the salary scale, so that CUNY pays salaries that are competitive with other research universities. But CUNY’s attempt to unilaterally impose one of its salary bargaining demands undercuts the union’s salary negotiations. We’ve filed a grievance on behalf of a member whose salary is in jeopardy, and we are willing to go to arbitration in that case. If the grievance is successful, we would seek to have the RRI agreement modified to allow for CUNY to pay RRIs for some. If the grievance is successful, the union can file a grievance to stop management from unilaterally imposing RRIs.

The PSC has and will continue to attempt to resolve this issue through negotiations. We recognize that special market circumstances exist and we are willing to address these in the context of other needs. If negotiations fail, however, we have asked CUNY to waive the preliminary grievance step so that this issue may be immediately moved to arbitration for resolution. CUNY, however, has not agreed to force the preliminary grievance step.

By continuing to offer RRI compensation after the explicit sunset date of the program and failing to seek negotiations with the union to renew the RRI agreement, CUNY has put at risk the continuation of RRIs for some. One effect, if the grievance is successful, could be that the RRI portion of salaries will be rescinded for those approved by the Board of Trustees for RRIs after the July 30, 2000 sunset date.

It is the PSC’s hope that no one will see a reduction in their annual salary. We have filed a grievance because CUNY cannot be allowed to take unilateral action when it has a legal obligation to negotiate with the union. Otherwise, we fear more and more of our contractual rights will be violated. We are to be governed by contractual agreements and good faith bargaining, and we are forced to bring CUNY to the table to negotiate over this issue or have it resolved in arbitration. The union’s goal for CUNY management to engage in good faith bargaining in order to resolve this issue speedily.

PSC picks candidates

Below are City Council candidates endorsed by the PSC in the November 6 general election. For information on PSC endorsements for mayor and other city-wide offices, check the union web site (www.psc-cuny.org) or call the PSC Hotline (212-869-1568).

Manhattan: 2/Margarita Lopez; 3/Christine Quinn; 4/Gale Brewer; 6/Scott Stringer; 8/Bill Perkins

Bronx: 12/Larry Seabrook; 13/Joseph Borelli; 14/Marco Serrano

Queens: 19/Tony Avella; 20/John Liu; 21/Haram Monsef; 22/Peter Vallone, Jr.; 23/David Weprin; 24/Jim Gentner; 25/Melinda Katz; 31/James Sanders; 32/ Joseph Addabbo; 38/Elizabeth Crowley

Staten Island: 50/Libby Hikind

PHOTOGRAPHS:

Photos by: Gary Schoichet

The theme of this year’s Labor Day Parade was “Save Our Schools,” and the PSC contingent marched immediately behind the UFT, whose president, Randi Weingarten, was the parade’s grand marshal. PSC signs linked the crisis at CUNY with the overall cause of public education.

“It was a magnificent performance,” John Jay chapter chair Haig Bohigian told Clarion. “When we marched with arms linked together, the TV cameras panned the afternoon event, call 212-869-1568 or check www.psc-cuny.org.

FRIDAY & SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 16-17
9:00 am: Conference at CUNY Grad Center on Globalization and Resistance. Discussion of the global justice movement including how it will be affected by the WTC tragedy. Speakers include Michael Hardt, Mike Davis, Manning Marable, Jeremy Brecher, Stanley Aronowitz, Barbara Bowen. 817-2000.

November 20: 10:30 am: Florida branch of the PSC Retirees Chapter meets the third Tuesday of every month at the South County Civic Center, 16700 Jog Road, in Delray Beach. For information, call Norma Newmark at 561-487-0431.

November 20: 10:00 am: Conference at CUNY Grad Center on Globalization and Resistance. Discussion of the global justice movement including how it will be affected by the WTC tragedy. Speakers include Michael Hardt, Mike Davis, Manning Marable, Jeremy Brecher, Stanley Aronowitz, Barbara Bowen. 817-2000.

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November 20: TIAA-CREF rep available at PSC office for retirement counseling. To set a time: bbo; 30/Elizabeth Crowley 31 /James Sanders; 32/Joseph Adda-
Hostos crackdown roils campus

Arrests condemned by student groups and PSC

By LINDA OCASIO

On September 20 and 21, charges against three students and a faculty member arrested during protests at Hostos Community College were dismissed for lack of evidence. Charges against a fourth student were continued.

A dispute over curriculum issues at Hostos that arose last spring is still unresolved, and new controversies have emerged this semester. But no matter what Hostos students, faculty and staff think about these issues, there is overwhelming agreement that the arrests were a violation of both civil rights and academic freedom.

The first arrests came on August 15, when a small group of student activists was denied access to the registrar's office. Afterhanding out leaflets, they were arrested. The court charged that Spanish-language classes had been eliminated in over eight subjects, protested special fees of up to $300 for language and writing workshops, and criticized the diversion of students to the non-credited "Walkout to Immersion Program" (see page 8).

CAMPUS CRACKDOWN

Campus officials were nervous about rumors of a boycott of registration, and they were quick to crack down. Miguel Malo, vice president of the Hostos Student Senate and head of the campus Ecological Club, told Clarion he was arrested after handing out the leaflets. As August 16 press release from the Hostos College administration stated, the arrests were "prevented because he was ‘blocking the entrance to the college and/or the registration area.'” The charges were "to prevent students from being able to register for classes in a timely and orderly manner.”

On August 16 phone call to Fernandez, Bowen protested the conduct of the arrest and voiced support for students' First Amendment rights and academic freedom, said Sue Dicker of the chapter's executive committee. Bowen also pressed Fernandez on who had ordered that CUNY faculty be banned from entering a CUNY building. Fernandez had said she had issued no such specific order — but did not disavow Crain's arrest.

Hostos spokesperson Hargraves insisted that "no Spanish courses have been cut, no offerings have been cut." Malo said that the problem was a reduction in the number of Spanish-language sections within a given course. This reduced selection, Malo said, "hurts night students the most."

Hostos PSC Chapter Chair Lucinda Hughey said it was true that the number of Spanish sections are "substantially down" recent years, but that this was a consequence of the reduction in students and faculty who were not consulted. Fernandez has claimed that the Hostos PSC chapter has asked for better communica-

Spanish-language sections, made joint action unlikely.

STUDENTS REJECT BOYCOTT

Fernandez has claimed that the arrests prevented a boycott of registration, which would have had disastrous consequences for Hostos. Although faculty did not support the arrests, they are worried about maintaining enrollment, and many therefore took a negative view of the August 15 protest. "We are frag-

ile," commented Hughey.

But student activists themselves were split over the boycott idea and, on the second point. Several delegates said that the urgency of defending civil liberties also had to be weighed. Students and faculty at Hostos are now in a better position to work to-

State, city policies hurt Hostos enrollment

Enrollment at Hostos has fallen dras-

tically over the last six years, from about 5,000 in 1995 to 3,200 in the current semester. Nydia Edge-

combe, the college's director of ad-

missions, believes that workfare and changes in student aid are re-

sponsible for much of the decline.

In 1995, New York's Tuition As-

sistance Program (TAP) was limited to community colleges to six semes-

ters instead of eight, and the follow-

ing year the imposition of workfare required students on public assis-

dance to work without pay for 20 hours a week. Federal Pell grants have also been limited to six semes-

ters at community colleges.

Workfare in particular exacts a toll on the students on public assistance. "It's hard for me to imagine how you could do this to somebody," said Hostos history professor Gerald Meyer. Workforce regulations limit them to two years of studies and push them towards occupation-

ally oriented courses, which de-

mand college level skills in math and English. But to succeed in these classes, most students need develop-

mental work and remediation — and therefore more time. Meyer said seven semesters is the average length of time for a Hostos student to graduate: "Handful, about 12 to 15, graduate in two years.” For the rest, these constraints "put a cap on where they can go later in their lives,” Meyer said.

The drop in enrollment is not only feared at Hostos that there might be another attempt to close the college, according to Lucinda Hughey. In 1975 a plan to close Hostos was turned back by strong college and community opposition.

In June the PSC Delegate Assem-

bly called for the restoration of TAP to eight semesters and backed legis-

lation that would give students on public assistance to count college at-

tendance toward workforce require-

ments (see p. 12).
Where have all the students gone?

EMIGRANT CHALLENGES

Immigrants face different educational and social challenges than their traditional foreign students, who arrive on visas, intend to return to their home countries, and often enroll in expensive language institutes prior to attending college classes. These institutes work to improve their students’ English until they can pass a gate-keeping test like the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language); many colleges set their TOEFL cut scores to exclude students who still need significant ESL instruction.

But immigrant ESL students can succeed in college before they achieve linguistic parity with native speakers. The 1994 ESL Task Force at CUNY showed that ESL students do about as well as mainstream students, and significantly better than under-prepared native speakers, on such measures as retention and graduation rates or GPA. Subsequent studies at the University of California and other public universities have confirmed this pattern.

To some, this comes as no surprise. The TOEFL manual says straightforwardly that the exam “is not designed to provide information about scholastic aptitude, motivation, language-learning aptitude, or cultural adaptability.” But most of us don’t read test guides or think much about the difference between language proficiency and intelligence.

Many experts on second-language acquisition believe that children learning English as a second language need up to seven years to compete linguistically with native speakers, even though they reach college-ready ESL student status much sooner. Research also suggests that most adults may never reach full linguistic parity with native speakers – but this does not stop them from using English effectively or excelling in other subjects.

The Trustees have never understood or acknowledged these findings on language acquisition and academic success. Though research tells us that four years is insufficient to mainstream many ESL students, the BoT decided that it would not admit any student needing ESL instruction to the senior colleges whose entire high school attendance took place in the US. This new definition of who CUNY will accept as an ESL student is demographic, not linguistic, and leads to some odd contradictions. While excluding many immigrants who entered a North American school system prior to high school, it includes students from places like the Philippines who may have studied English all their lives.

Most ESL programs identify their students through the judgment of knowledgeable faculty or tests of specific features of language. Until the Trustees intervened, CUNY had always relied on this kind of “operational” definition of ESL status. After two years of lobbying by concerned faculty, this summer CUNY management added a review process that allowed ESL status to be determined, once again, by a writing sample rather than by demographic specifications set by the Trustees. However, the initial admissions process still relies on the Trustees’ demographic definition, and many students who need ESL instruction therefore may not make it into the review process and could fall through the cracks.

Meanwhile, the debate over English instruction and access to community college courses can be expected to last at least one more year. Meanwhile, CUNY’s Office of Institutional Research, only 30-40% of ESL students end up taking courses for credit at CUNY.

ESL in CUNY’s community colleges

By SUSAN DRAMO

While the decline in ESL students has been most pronounced at CUNY’s senior colleges, community colleges have also been affected by the debate over ESL policy and open admissions.

Since 1996, students needing the most basic level of ESL instruction have been advised to go to the non-credit CUNY Language Immersion Program (CLIP), deferring college enrollment for up to a year while they work to improve their English. Three of the six community colleges no longer offer the most basic level of ESL as part of their curriculum, leaving CLIP as the only option. Debate over CLIP has been extensive within CUNY. Last spring Hostos Community College administration tried to eliminate its first-level ESL course, but temporarily backed down after protests from students, faculty, and administrators.

“The cost of CLIP is $30 a week for 25 hours of intensive instruction,” said Ellen Balleslop, a CLIP faculty member at Bronx Community College. “They don’t have to use financial aid on no-credit classes.” But the full-time schedule of CLIP can make it difficult for working students to attend: many CUNY students hold down jobs that mean they can only attend college part-time.

“By not offering the most basic level of ESL at the community colleges and pushing students into CLIP, CUNY is in effect ending open admissions at the community colleges,” said Mercie Pupel, president of the CUNY ESL Council. Pupel added that students routed into CLIP take longer to graduate: Miguel Malo, a student leader at Hostos, told Collier, “Many students want to take other classes for credit while they study English. They don’t want to be slowed down.”

Some faculty, on the other hand, argue that the ESL course has become too intensive, especially for students with very limited English. Ray Hubbenener, director of CLIP at Bronx Community College, says that students are able to attend CUNY as matriculated students after a semester or two of CLIP instruction. “Pedagogically, it’s a great setup,” argued Balleslop. “The teacher has far more time to get to know each student’s learning process.”

But Balleslop said that despite the importance of the work they do, CLIP’s faculty get poor treatment from CUNY management. “We are officially ‘part-time’ employees,” she said. “Our work load is 750 to 900 contact hours per year.” Meanwhile, CLIP’s annual starting pay has not increased since 1995. In contract negotiations, the PSC has proposed converting CLIP teachers to the Lecturer title.

Meanwhile, the debate over English instruction and access to community college courses can be expected to last at least one more year. Meanwhile, CUNY’s Office of Institutional Research, only 30-40% of ESL students end up taking courses for credit at CUNY.

By MARC WARD

Lehman College

This fall at Lehman College, where I’ve worked since 1984, enrollment in the English as a Second Language (ESL) Program hit a record low of only 83 students—down near-

ly 90% from a high point of 718 stu-

dents in 1994. ESL headcount at CUNY’s senior colleges has fallen from approximately 8,200 students in 1994 to under 1,800 last spring.

This decline is not a single decade of rising immigration in New York City. Wholly all the ESL students gone?

There are several factors at work, in-

cluding limitations on ESL and re-

medial courses, the impact of work-

place rules, implementation of the CUNY Language Immersion Program (CLIP), rising admissions cri-

tera and fewer ESL applicants.

In a recent memo to Presidents and Provosts, Executive Vice Chan-

cellor for Academic Affairs Louise Maller wrote that CUNY needs to “improve our ability to identify col-

lege-ready ESL students.” But CUNY has never said exactly what a college-ready ESL student is.

IMMIGRANT CHALLENGES

By the time we figure out the policy, they’ll change it.

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Eighth Street has taken other steps to reverse the decline in ESL enrollment. For example, ESL students now have two years, rather than just 18 months, to pass the CUNY ACT exams in reading and writing. ESL faculty have welcomed the feasibility, but ongoing changes in testing and admissions rules have led to confusion throughout the Uni-

versity. One testing director stated bluntly, “By the time we figure out the policy, they’ll change it.”

For those who do get admitted, CUNY may make it harder for them to graduate. Vice Chancellor Mer-

ner’s memo also suggests that credit be reduced for ESL courses, which will hamper ESL students in getting financial aid and making progress toward their degrees.

The New York State Regents’ English exam has cut the graduation rate of high school ESL students.

But even those who graduate have a harder time getting into CUNY’s new Admissions Index, based on such measures as cumulative acad-

emic average and SAT. All of these depend heavily on English profi-

ciency. But since ESL grades are ex-

cluded from the index, years of success in ESL classwork are ignored unless a student demonstrates near-parity with native speakers by pass-

ing the English Regents exam.

DENYING ACCESS?

This seems to confirm the fears of Professor Virginia Collier of George Mason University, an inter-

ationally known expert on the lan-

guage acquisition and cognitive de-

velopment of school-age bilinguals.

Commenting on the “standards movement,” Collier said, “Standards of ‘minimum competency’ in basic skills in reading and writing in English will be completely inap-

propriate for second language stu-

dents, if based on expectations for native speakers. Such a test will be-

come a gateway to promoting access to higher education for all second-

language students.”

City University has lost 80% of its senior college ESL students, and is now being forced to consider some hard questions about immigration, language and opportunity. CUNY has long educated the children of immigrants. But in today’s econom-

ic, massive numbers of adult bilin-

guals also want a place at our uni-

versities for themselves.
change period for health plan ends October 31

By ESTELLE GIAMMUSSO
PSC/CUNY Welfare Fund

Who should call about a grievance

By DEBRA BERGEN
PSC Director of Contract Administration

The grievance and arbitration procedures in the union contract can provide you with a way to challenge actions taken by management. Your right to use the grievance and arbitration procedures is in the heart of the collective bargaining agreement; it is the most important right you have under the union contract. But how do you know when you have a case?

In general, you may be able to file a grievance if management:

- violates the provisions of the contract,
- violates the University’s own rules and regulations.
- violates past practice
- administers a wrongful disciplinary action.

If you think you might have grounds for a grievance, talk to an expert—a PSC grievance counselor— to find out for sure. They will evaluate the situation and explain your options. Contacting a counselor immediately is critical because grievances must be filed within the time limits laid out in the grievance and arbitration provision of the contract. Article 28. Otherwise you may forfeit your right to pursue the matter as a grievance, regardless of the merits of your case.

Below is a list of who to call. On days when they are in the PSC Central Office, grievance counselors for CLTs, HEOS and adjuncts and advocates can be reached at (212) 354-1252.

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Invest in public life

By BARBARA BOWEN
PSC President

September 11 brought unspeakable suffering to New York’s working people. I want to extend my sympathy to readers who lost people you loved. In this I am joined by thousands of PSC members, many of whom have called the union office to ask that we express our sympathy for others in the CUNY community and throughout the city.

Perhaps in this crisis the PSC can draw on an older tradition of trade unionism, developed among workers who had fewer resources, in a city where an industry was a primary source of both support and identity for its members in need. All of us have suffered disadvantages that range from furloughed classes to loss of concentration to confusion and numbness and rage; many of us have already begun to rethink our lives in response to the attack and its political aftermath. I want the union to be relevant in the current moment.

The response of the PSC officers and staff has been multiple, starting with such basics as setting up a relief fund, safeguarding the health of CUNY faculty and staff in work places in lower Manhattan, negotiating a new academic calendar at sites where classes were disrupted and ensuring that no employees lose income because of forces beyond their control. We have also offered support to other unions, especially those whose members have suffered a staggering number of casualties. Other articles in this issue tell that story. Here I would like to think about where we stand now that both everything and nothing have changed.

What sustained the city through the past few weeks was an ideal and a practice of public life. One thing that was instantly clear from the World Trade Center disaster was the importance of workers in the public sphere: firefighters, emergency medical teams, sanitation, transit, teachers, police. Imagine if these services had been left to the demands of the market, as airport security privatization untrained, minimum-wage, no-benefit, unionized workers entrapped with life-and-death jobs.

If there was a different timbre to New Yorkers’ response to the attack from that in other American cities – an appetite for cooperation, a conscious rejection of racism – it came from immersion in the density and diversity of an urban population. The ad hoc memorials that blossomed across the city tacitly affirmed the desire for public meaning. As knots of commuters, three weeks after the attack, still gathered in the Times Square subway station to study the posters of the missing, they could have had little hope of being able to assist in finding these loved people. Instead, they gathered because they wanted to read the text of the city and work out its meaning together.

This is the moment to invest in, not starve, public urban life. Hearing of the disaster and the raw needs of so many people, many of us may have felt that the decent thing would be to put aside our own campaign for restoration of CUNY. I think that is exactly the wrong way to go. The city has never needed quality education more than now; it would be terribly shortsighted to skim on New York City’s public university just when thousands of people need the education that will propel a new New York. In a very real sense, rebuilding New York means rebuilding CUNY.

The calls for austerity have already begun, a chorus of private and governmental interests asserting that workers will have to make sacrifices so Wall Street investors and corporate owners can maintain their levels of profit. Let us take at least one lesson from the 1975 fiscal crisis, a crisis from which CUNY salaries are still recovering: imposing austerity on the city’s working people would devastate public life and undermine urban culture for a generation or more. There is federal and state money for disaster relief; there has to be money for rebuilding the city’s real infrastructure – housing, schools, healthcare, public services – and that includes money for CUNY.

The union’s negotiating team will continue to press at the bargaining table in other forums for a contract that advances the City University, even as we adjust our strategy for the future. The union’s gamble with our lives on a “bare-bones budget” has proved singularly ill-timed. As an academic union, we have a special responsibility to defend freedom of speech and thought: CUNY must continue to be a safe space for our students and for serious academic inquiry into the hard issues before us. Anyone who visited Borough of Manhattan Community College on October 1, the day it opened for the first time since September, would have had no better proof of the value of public urban life. What took me by surprise was the quickness with which people got down to teaching and learning; there was an urgency about being engaged in shared work that has everything to do with the real future of this city. If ever there was a time to be strong in our call for investment in that future, the time is now.

POETRY

Four by Kimiko Hahn

Her Very Eyes

A friend’s sister, my daughter reports, cannot close her eyes, and I interrupt; she must be asthmatic irration — then she adds, she sees bodies under metal, concrete, glass, chairs, desks, faxes, machines, saviors — with a pulse. She waves bye to their children, late for school, and sits down to talk to me for a second then stand again for the ordinary.

While it may not appear in every issue, we plan to make poetry a regular part of the pages of Clarion. Kimiko Hahn has agreed to serve as Clarion’s poetry editor, and we have selected the poems above to introduce her to our readers. Hahn was born outside New York City and has been a professor of English at Queens College since 1993. She is the author of six collections of poetry, including The Artist’s Daughter, forthcoming from W.W. Norton.

From Wellfleet Tanka

43. On a tourist boat out of Provincetown we whale-watch a tall larger than my whole sun-burnt body.
35. Of her daughter’s whereabouts she knows enough; but of dragonflies, she collects books.
45. I miss most the outdoor shower. Nine at night. A light rain over the spray. A light from the bedroom window where he reads about psychopathology.

Note: Wellfleet is a small town on Cape Cod; tanka is a classical form of Japanese poetry.

REBUILDING
Drugs costs, drug profits

BY BOB YOUNG

Earlier this year, the Professiona1 Staff Congress and other city unions won an agreement that will increase management contributions to union health and welfare funds. This increase was needed largely to offset the rising cost of prescription drugs, and it will help protect employees’ benefits in the immediate future. But it unfortunately does not address the root of the problem, which is all too likely to surface again.

The real problem is that this country, unlike most European countries, has no national policies aimed at moderating the drug industry’s escalating prices and profits. The pharmaceutical business now has the highest profits of any industry in the US. Last year its 13 largest companies netted $28 billion, a 15% increase over 1999. Yet the US government goes to great lengths to subsidize the drug industry, and as a result Americans pay twice for their drugs – once at the pharmacy and again through their taxes. The drug industry is lightly taxed, while Public Citizen’s investigations documented that the drug industry’s effective tax rate is about 40% less than the average for all other industries in the US.

The drug industry is locked in an escalating price war, with the pharmaceutical industry increasing its advertising budgets to an average of approximately 40% a year since the government relaxed rules on direct-to-consumer advertising in 1997. Until drug industry profits are brought under control, prescription prices will continue to rise. And unions will have to fight harder and just maintain the benefits they’ve already won.

Bob Young is research director for Public Citizen’s Congress Watch in Washington, D.C. The two Public Citizen reports are available on the Web at http://www.citizens.org/publications/index.cfm?section=10&keywords=

By CECELIA MCCALL

PSC Secretary

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Something new on the waterfront

I
t you’re like me, some of what you know about dockworkers may come from On the Waterfront. Although the film can be viewed as director Elia Kazan’s attempt to justify naming names in the McCarthy era, its plot focuses on a New York longshore union’s struggle to rid itself of mobster leadership. In Divided We Stand, Americans Workers and the Struggle for Black Equality, Bruce Nelson analyzes a side of waterfront life that Kazan’s film passes over. Few workers were more classically proletarian than the longshoremen and few were more exploited. But Nelson describes how they remained rooted in the racio-cultural parameters of family, parish and neighborhood, how control of a pair was determined first by color and ethnicity. When the United Longshoremen of Greater New York monitored hiring practices on the docks in 1936, it found that forty-two experienced and skilled black dockworkers presented themselves daily for employment – and were bypassed every day.

Where black workers were able to find employment on the docks, they were limited to the lowest-paid, hardiest jobs. Even in the face of this segregation, they were able to win some power. Nelson tells how in New Orleans, they used these back-breaking jobs to create a powerful all-black union, Local 1419 of the International Longshoreman’s Association (ILA).

If the New Orleans waterfront had been organized by the left-leaning International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) instead of the more conservative ILA, would there have been less segregation and more solidarity? In the Jim Crow South, it might well have made no difference.

ILA Local 1422 in Charleston, SC, home local of the Charleston 5, has a similar history. Like the ILA local in New Orleans, Local 1422 also became a pillar of the black community. In recent years it has been central to the campaign to free the Charleston 5, the five blackILA Local 1422 members of Congress. If the ports were controlled by a member of the checkers’ and clerks’ union, Local 1271.

When a ship from Danish Nordsjælland Lines used scalab labor to unload in Charleston in January 2000, the union set up a picket line – which was met by 600 state troopers in riot gear, armored vehicles, horses and helicopters. A confrontation followed; Local 1422 President Ken Riley needed 12 stitches after he was hit in the head by a police baton. At first the Charleston 5 were charged with a made- purpose crime of trespassing and let go. But state Attorney General Charlie Condion had the men rearrested and ratcheted up the charges to felony riot, conspiracy, assault and resisting arrest. Writing in The Nation (August 6, 2000), Joann Wypijewski describes Condion as “an ambitious Democrat turned right-wing Republican” who “openly links his prosecution of the 5 with preservation of South Carolina’s anti-union ‘right-to-work’ laws.” Since January 2000, the Charleston 5 have been under house arrest; they are expected to go to trial this fall. Under pressure from its rank and file, the ILA has joined a movement that includes the Charleston 5 defense fund. Under pressure from its rank and file, the ILA has joined a movement that includes the Charleston 5 defense fund. Under pressure from its rank and file, the ILA has joined a movement that includes the Charleston 5 defense fund. Under pressure from its rank and file, the ILA has joined a movement that includes the Charleston 5 defense fund. Under pressure from its rank and file, the ILA has joined a movement that includes the Charleston 5 defense fund.
Open access and fighting poverty

A CUNY collaboration

BY MELINDA LACKET & MAUREEN LANE

Women Rights Initiative (WRI)

STEPHEN LOFFREDO

CUNY School of Law

Lisa Cora enrolled in Bronx Community College the same week the New York Human Resources Administration (HRA) deemed her family eligible for a welfare grant of $327 every month. Two years later, Lisa (who asks that her real name be withheld) is halfway to earning a Bachelor’s degree at Hunter College. Lisa would soon be a teacher—the goal she’s had for nearly 20 years—except that she’s under intense pressure from HRA to quit school and return to low-wage employment. “Unfortunately, each day of college could be my last,” Lisa offers in a moment of near hopelessness. She has been ordered to add ten hours of workfare to her schedule.

A COLOR-CODED WEEK

The first page of Lisa’s planner is a color-coded week-at-a-glance with school photos pasted opposite the calendar page: her 10-year-old son smiling shyly and her 7-year-old daughter, all brown pigeon’s eyes. Her days start at 6 a.m. Blue slots indicate time to fix the kids three meals and green is time to help them with their homework. These are interspersed with five college classes, a 20-hour per week work study job, and a day’s worth of internship hours. She allot less than six hours per night for sleep, that’s one day’s worth of internship hours. She allot less than six hours per night for sleep, that’s one day’s worth of internship hours. She allot less than six hours per night for sleep, that’s one day’s worth of internship hours. She allot less than six hours per night for sleep, that’s one day’s worth of internship hours. She allot less than six hours per night for sleep, that’s one day’s worth of internship hours. She allot less than six hours per night for sleep, that’s one day’s worth of internship hours. She allot less than six hours per night for sleep, that’s one day’s worth of internship hours.

There are a variety of things that PSC members can do to support Intro. 959. Meeting with City Council members, letter-writing phone-banking, classroom presentations and legal training are all essential to raise awareness. If you’d like to launch or join these activities on your campus, please call Maureen Lane at 212-650-3268, or e-mail mlane@hejira.hunter.cuny.edu.

15-MINUTE ACTIVIST

A free academy

As the most diverse university in the country and a microcosm of New York, CUNY is in a special position to offer a model of opposition to racism and support for academic freedom. Both need to be reaffirmed as New York reacts to the horror of 6,000 deaths and the US launches an anti-terrorism campaign.

All too many of our students—Afghan, Pakistani, West Indian, Israeli, North African and others—now feel less secure to speak in classes or even come to campus. Faculty and staff can also be targeted: one South Asian faculty member was recently reported to the FBI by a student whose suspicions were aroused by a class on the medieval prominence of Istanbul. Anti-Semitism has also been on the rise.

As a union, we need to respond by showing zero tolerance at CUNY for any infringements of academic freedom or attacks—violent or subtle—on students, faculty or staff because of their race or religion.

Take 15 minutes this month to call the Arab students’ association or another student club on your campus and ask what you can do to make sure they continue to feel welcome at CUNY. If you know faculty and staff who feel threatened, ask how you can support them. In this crisis, CUNY has a chance to offer a lasting model of how a diverse academic community can defeat racism and fear.