

CHAPTER CHAIRPERSON PROFESSIONAL STAFF CONGRESS ~~FOR~~ HOSTOS

Statement made by Gerald Meyer concerning the campaign of Hostos United/Hostos Unido to obtain the 500 Grand Concourse building for the immediate use of Hostos Community College at a press conference held at Hostos on March 30.

Hostos Community College has the worst facilities of any institution of higher learning in the state of New York. Specifically, Hostos has the least square footage per student; Hostos has no auditorium, cafeteria, gymnasium, faculty or student lounge. Aside from making the day-to-day fulfillment of Hostos' educational mission most difficult, Hostos' lack of facilities endangers its programs and the very existence of the college. One of Hostos' outstanding programs, Dental Hygiene, is threatened with loss of accreditation because of inadequate facilities. The Middle States Accreditation Association awarded Hostos its accreditation in 1974 with the notation that the school's facilities be expanded and improved. Middle States returns to Hostos next year to review its accreditation.

A coalition--Hostos United/Hostos Unido--comprised of the Professional Staff Congress Hostos chapter (AFT), the Student Government Organization, and many student clubs (the Black Student Union, the Dominican Student Organization, the South American Student Organization, the Puerto Rican Student Organization) was organized this January for the purpose of securing an immediate remedy for the uniquely negative facilities situation at Hostos.

Facing Hostos' main building is 500 Grand Concourse. This building was obtained for Hostos in the spring of 1974 after a campaign organized by the Professional Staff Congress and the Student Government Organization. This eight story building contains a cafeteria and sufficient space to allow Hostos to provide for its students--98 percent of whom are Hispanic and Black--facilities equal to those obtaining at the other branches of City University. Nonetheless, this building has been standing idle ever since it was attained for Hostos.

In order to bring Hostos' plight to the attention of the public, Hostos United/Hostos Unido sponsored a march of over 1,000 people through the South Bronx on March 9 and a vigil, which attracted an almost equal number of people, on March 16. Hostos United/Hostos Unido has collected over 5,000 names on a petition demanding that this facility immediately be made available for Hostos--

a petition whom, among others, Chancellor of the City University, Robert J. Kibbee signed. In response to Hostos United/ Hostos Unido's plea for help, numerous political, religious, and civic leaders from the communities Hostos serves have written to Mayor Koch on behalf of our cause. The Delegate Assembly of the Professional Staff Congress has gone on record in support of Hostos' right to the immediate use of the 500 Grand Concourse building and the University Senate (CUNY) is expected to pass a similar resolution at its next meeting.

All of the above mentioned activities and the widespread media coverage which they have generated have brought the fact that Hostos has the worst physical conditions of any institution of higher learning in the state of New York to the attention of the powers-that-be. Lloyd Kaplan, special assistant to Mayor Koch on the question of the South Bronx, and representatives of Herman Badillo and Harrison Goldin have visited Hostos and have seen for themselves the deplorable--indeed, insulting--conditions which afflict its students, faculty, and staff.

Despite the fact that these conditions have existed since Hostos opened its doors eight years ago, despite the fact that Hostos' situation is uniquely bad, despite the ^{fact} that a remedy for these conditions exists--that is, an empty building which is being held for Hostos--Mayor Koch insists that Hostos be subjected to the freeze on new construction for the City University, a freeze which is not to be lifted until the University submits a master plan for facilities in the university up through the year 1990. The question of the 500 Grand Concourse building, however, does not involve construction, it involves renovation--renovation which has been held in abeyance for four years. Moreover, the submission of this master plan may take two or more years.

Hostos:

the only bilingual institution of higher learning this side of El Paso,
a crime-free oasis, a constructive force amidst the devastation and

neglect of the South Bronx;

an institution which attained unconditional accreditation,

a community college with career and liberal arts programs as fine

as any in the City University,

will not submit to this situation any longer.

Hostos United/Hostos Unido is prepared to take whatever action necessary to ensure that Hostos receives the equal treatment which it deserves.