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IPSC / CUNY



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Chancellor Rebuffed:

FACULTY ELECTS UNION TO NEGOTIATE

PACT FOR ALL 16,000 ON CUNY STAFF

In an unprecedented election, the City University faculty today chose the Professional Staff Congress--the largest university union in the country --as its collective bargaining agent and created a major new force on the New York labor scene.

Split since 1969 into two units represented by separate unions, the faculty voted for a single union to represent the entire 16,000-member professional staff of the 21-campus CUNY system.

It was a stunning blow to CUNY Chancellor Robert J. Kibbee, who was inaugurated last Thursday (June 1) in the post he has held since September.

Voting for one unit, the faculty abolished the prevailing two-way division between full-time and part-time staff which was favored by Kibbee, and rejected a new segregation of nonclassroom personnel which was proposed by Kibbee.

The election was unusual in that it allowed the employees themselves to determine not only their bargaining agent but also the shape of their bargaining unit.

The vote on the unit question significantly affirmed the role of nonclassroom professionals--librarians, counselors, laboratory technicians, et al.--in the University's overall program.

The victorious union, the Professional Staff Congress, had campaigned vigorously for a single unit.

The ballots, counted today by the State's Public Employment Relations Board in Albany, asked each staff member whether he wished to be represented (1) in one unit and (2) by the PSC.

The vote in favor of a single unit was 8,258 to 942.

The vote in favor of the PSC was 8,789 to 538.

The Professional Staff Congress was formed April 14 through the merger of the United Federation of College Teachers and the Legislative Conference. It is affiliated with the National Education Association, the American Federation of Teachers (AFL-CIO), the newly merged state-wide New York Congress of Teachers, the New York State AFL-CIO, and the New York City Central Labor Council.

But the University had refused to recognize PSC, to accept a single bargaining unit, or to negotiate a new contract. The present contracts expire August 31.

Instead, the University had petitioned PERB to divide the instructional staff into full-time faculty, part-time faculty, and nonclassroom professionals.

The faculty's rejection of this position and its election of PSC augur a tough negotiating stance by the union, which has charged the University with stalling negotiations and with massive violations of the present contracts.

Its negotiating demands will be made public at a news conference shortly.

STATEMENT

In a statement issued today, PSC President Belle Zeller and Deputy President Israel Kugler hailed the outcome as "a victory for our students and a victory for the staff."

They continued:

"It affirms our conviction that the University's responsibility to its students, especially in the context of Open Admissions, extends beyond the classroom--to the libraries, to the counselors' offices, to the laboratories --into every aspect of academic life."

Dr. Zeller and Dr. Kugler contended that hundreds of the University's 16,000 eligible voters did not receive ballots because of faulty lists furnished PERB by the University.

They said today that the total response and the majorities recorded on both questions "greatly strengthen our hand at the negotiating table."

BACKGROUND

Today's election outcome was seen by the union's leaders as a vote of confidence in its battles with the University and a clear rejection of Administration policies.

The union is currently fighting the University in scores of individual grievances and allegations of major contract violations. They include three charges of Improper Practice due to be heard by the Public Employment Relations Board June 15, which challenge:

*the Board of Higher Education action of April 24 which froze salaries at present levels, effective September 1, 1972, thus canceling the increments provided in the present contracts;

*the Board's adoption of a multiple positions policy at the same meeting; and

*the implementation of student evaluation systems at the various colleges.

The union claims that all three policies were effected by the University without the bilateral negotiation called for in the present contracts.

The PSC has also accused the University of failing to implement the minimal staff facilities and the minimal percentages in professorial ranks called for in the present contracts.

The University's attempt to freeze the \$1.5-million Faculty Research Program at 2/12 of its contractual level for the coming year was overturned in an arbitration won by the union May 26.

In addition, the union has been critical of the Administration, as well as the City and the State, for failing to adequately fund the Open Admissions Program. The union has contended that the Program has become a "revolving door" for thousands of students deprived of the individualized instruction they need to overcome scholastic handicaps.

Collective bargaining is still relatively rare in higher education.

Of the approximately 2,500 colleges and universities in the country, only 254 have faculty unions.

Many outside New York are watching the progress of the CUNY faculty, which became the first major university staff to organize and negotiate master contracts in 1969.

At that time, the United Federation of College Teachers represented the part-time staff and lecturers, and the Legislative Conference negotiated for the rest of the full-time staff.

Their merger into the Professional Staff Congress on April 14 ended more than nine years of rivalry between the two unions.

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On April 17, the merged organization petitioned PERB for recognition as the successor of the two previous unions and asked for a single unit.

The University opposed it on both issues, but on May 12 agreed to let the faculty decide in an election.

Today the faculty decided.

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