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A DSC Publication

TODAY'S ADJUNCTS: BORN IN THE USA

(Editor's note: The PTU is an independent organization hoping to become an official union through a union certification campaign this fall. It hopes to organize adjuncts and assistants in the CUNY system, breaking away from the full-time faculty union. This article discusses the situation of adjuncts nationwide as well as at CUNY.)

By Tom Smith

Meanwhile, involuntary part-time work has spread so extensively among credentialled strata in health care and education that whole new categories of underclass professionals have come into existence. . . . Colleges, aided by a Supreme Court decision that ruled most private institutional faculty outside the ambit of the NLRA, have so vigorously replaced full-timers that today more than a third of all college teaching is conducted by "adjuncts."

--Mike Davis,

"The Fall of the House of Labor," Prisoners of the American Dream (London: Verso, 1986), p. 152.

Mike Davis's figures on the number of adjuncts teaching today are already out of date. Adjuncts now comprise nearly half of college faculty in the U.S. today. The problem Davis is discussing--our problem--has become even more serious, and will continue to worsen.

The adjunctification of American college faculty is not a fluke in an otherwise, "healthy" economy raved about by the Reagan Administration and its supporters. The American economy, especially its labor relations, is by no means healthy. Although the economy might be producing a few healthy

fat salaries for the new upper social strata of corporate managers and professionals, it is depriving the majority of the American workforce of the income, benefits, and economic security that they have come to expect after FDR's New Deal and the rise of the CIO. This is thoroughly discussed and documented in Davis's new book. And according to him, adjunctification is part and parcel of this unfortunate, nation-wide trend in labor relations.

According to Emily Abel, author of the major book on the plight of adjuncts today, Terminal Degrees, many graduate students,

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THE DSC AND THE WILL-TO-POWER

By Vincent J. Tirelli, Chair of the DSC

The Doctoral Students' Council (DSC) is our student government here at the Graduate Center. What it becomes beyond that depends upon us. If we want it to be, the DSC can be a passive distributor of activity fees. Or it can be a thriving center of activity. We can go through the motions and get a Ph.D (perhaps it is even easier to get it in this manner); or, we can participate in the struggle to create an environment in which we can live, love, and work, and thus gain more than a Ph.D--we can gain a real education.

Students, faculty, and staff have all complained at one time or another that there is little community at the Graduate Center, intellectual or otherwise. It is a commuter school, there is not much common space in which to interact, and nobody has the time anyway. The way to build that community in the midst of this huge, impersonal, vulgar city is to struggle together to create a University that not only minimally educates, but is also socially, politically, and culturally relevant.

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An important part of our education comes from meeting students and faculty from every other discipline in the University. The physical structure of the Graduate Center and the organizational structure of the programs do not often encourage interdisciplinary activity. It must be created. Personally, I began to feel that I was exerting some control over my environment when I became involved with active University groups--the CUNY Committee Against U.S. Intervention in Latin America, the DSC, the Graduate Students' Union(GSU), and the adjuncts union, known as the Part-Time Research and Instructional Staff Union(PTU). It is in groups such as these that we can learn about our University, our city, and the politics behind the scenes.

The educational value--good and bad--of the City University is that it is a microcosm of the "real" world--it either teaches us to struggle or it beats us into apathy and cynicism--just like the real world. Today, our situation in the university is pretty gritty. In our cafeteria, students do not get food that is at the same time healthy, tasty, varied, and

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affordable. There is no abundance of financial support for our students. We've got to get "real" jobs to survive our school years--but don't get any incompletes. Daycare--where? A health plan?--if you're over 28, just don't get sick.

The problems of this school are the problems of this city, state, and nation. We need imagination and creativity and we get bureaucracy. In order to survive in this society, the university system is increasingly run as "efficiently" as possible. But the question looms large--for whom? Thorstein Veblen calls such obsession with efficiency the "machine logic" of capitalism: it transforms everything in its path into an image of itself--but to what ends? Who controls it? Does anyone?

What kind of world do we want to live in? Let's face it, we live in an age where the president of our nation can get away with saying that we should not interfere with the internal affairs of the sovereign nation of South Africa, while in the same breath claiming that the Sandinistas have betrayed

their revolution and must be held accountable. We live in an age where sexual preference is increasingly becoming a matter of state regulation; where nuclear testing continues despite the Soviet Union's self-imposed moratorium; where subways are dirtier and more frustrating than ever; where the streets, our streets, have never seen so many homeless people; where our streets have never seen so many drug dealers and addicts. I have personally experienced the problems this new poverty creates: At 6:30PM on October 23, 1985, a woman received wounds from bullets fired in a fight in Bryant Park between members of this new American underclass. She died--fifty yards away from our little ivory tower, and twenty-five feet behind me. Where does our world begin and end; and where do we start taking control of our own world?

We can only begin to take control of our lives where we live and work, by taking part in the decisions that affect our lives. For this is where our immediate concerns lie, and thus this is where we can begin to organize most effectively. But by dealing with our own, local problems together, we can and must simultaneously deal with bigger issues. Our problems are not simply the fault of this administrator, or that faculty member, or the fellow student sitting across the seminar table from us: our problems are endemic to our society. It is in the university that there is the brightest potential for attacking these problems. It may not seem that way, but things can turn around very quickly. If students do not initiate that change, it will not happen. As graduate students we can play a special role. We are mature enough to organize and make decisions about the things that affect our lives, decisions that are now often made for us.

One of the most important issues we need to address is health care. While the Graduate School may offer the best of what is available at these prices in health insurance, the fact is that the best of what is available at these prices in our society is inadequate and insulting. We have a right to decent health care, not simply as graduate students but as human beings living in the twentieth century. How can we address a seemingly monumental problem as inadequate health care? We can begin by meeting and talking about it. We can learn about it and develop a plan of action. If we keep at it long enough, the issue (or a whole range of issues) may become politicized so that it becomes an issue that our society can no longer ignore. In the meantime, we

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can offer suggestions for improvements for the short-term. Simply by coming together, we might convince an insurance agency out there that a good group health insurance plan for Graduate Center students might attract enough clients to be profitable.

Together, we must explore ways of affecting the quality of our lives. The DSC would like to invite you to participate. The Summer Steering Committee has drafted a new Constitution for the Doctoral and Graduate Students' Organization (DSO). The present Constitution hinders participation and action; the new proposal encourages both (see Constitution article). Another major goal for the DSC is to get a real student newspaper off the ground (see Fee Increase article). We need articles; and we need volunteers.

We need a good newspaper, because we have many issues to discuss. If the student body is to be active and effective it must have a genuinely open avenue of communication. We need to discuss health and safety, eating and living conditions, asbestos, student and faculty input into decision-making, discrimination, copy machines that don't work, Ronald Reagan, Nicaragua, cinema, language, subways, how to cope. What is the role of the DSC, what is the role of the Graduate Council, what is the Graduate Council, what is the purpose of life, why does it seem that there is no purpose to life today? We need a forum.

So please: Support this student newspaper, and get involved in the issues that affect our lives as students of this university and citizens of this world. Participate!

LATIN AMERICAN FILM SERIES

The CUNY Latin American Study Group invites you to join us in an effort to increase general understanding and awareness of past and present developments in Central and Latin America. Films and discussions will be held throughout the 1986-87 school year. The first films of the series will be shown SEPTEMBER 26TH @ 5:30 PM and will examine the relationship between State, Religion and economic development in Brazil. The films to be shown are:

The Journey: From Faith to Action in Brazil
People of No Interest

CUNY Graduate Center Auditorium
33 West 42nd Street
September 26th @ 5:30 PM - \$2 donation

Time and Place regarding subsequent films will be announced on the 26th.

Pledge your resistance to U.S. intervention in Nicaragua!
Brigades to work in Nicaragua's coffee and cotton harvest are forming now.
Join a brigade or help us organize! Call:
(212)865-5904

Join the Harvest in Nicaragua
Unase a la Cosecha en Nicaragua

Promesa a la resistencia de la intervencion norteamericana en Nicaragua! Las brigadas para trabajar en la cosecha de cafe y algodón en Nicaragua se estan formando ahora. Unase o ayudenos a organizarla. Para informaciones llame: (212)865-5904