

Q's and A's about the Take-Over of 500 Grand Concourse

1. Q. Is it against the law to enter 500 GC?

A. At the moment that I am writing this (4/8/78), no injunction has been obtained by the Dormitory Authority to legally evict those presently occupying 500 GC. At such time as the Dormitory Authority produces such a document and properly serves it, all of those present in 500 Grand Concourse will have ample time--if they so wish--to leave. The simple fact is--the police are not interested in arresting forty to one hundred law-abiding citizens. Apparently, the Dormitory Authority is having some difficulty in convincing the police to take an interest in those occupying 500 GC. The commander of the 40th precinct inspected the premises on the day after the takeover. He found that, contrary to the rumors generated by certain parties, there was no damage to the boiler or any other facility in 500 GC. Moreover, within a period of twenty-four hours, the students had cleaned three of the five floors. These facts, coupled with the forty-two people (forty students and two teachers) who were willing to be arrested and a vocal demonstration of some 300 students and a few faculty members outside of the 500 GC were enough to convince the commander that there were more pressing law-enforcement problems in the South Bronx.

The rumor-mongers in Hostos and their victims might take a cue from the commander of the 40th precinct--instead of guessing what's going on, why don't they come across the street and take a tour of the facility.

2. Q. What is going on in 500 GC?

A. Classes (47 on Wednesday, somewhat fewer on the preceding and succeeding days), a small child care facility, cultural and political events (Puerto Rican Cultural Week's events were held in 500 GC), and students sleeping and eating twenty-four hours a day to ensure that the building not be taken back.

3. Q. What is the condition of the building?

A. Excellent. The most immediate problems are: a lack of water power past the first floor; lack of heat and hot water. The most serious long-range problem is that the ventilation system is hazardous because it is lined with asbestos. Half the windows can be opened and inasmuch as we lived without air conditioning for thousands of years, I fail to see why we can't use the building minus artificial ventilation until such time as a new ventilation system is installed. With the most insignificant kind of investment--

around \$30,000, some have estimated--the building could almost immediately be put to use for classroom and office purposes. Note that the first floor consists of a beautiful cafeteria; the upper four floors need partitions.

4. Q. Hasn't taking the building angered Mayor Koch?

A. Apparently, the Acting President and some members of the council of chairpersons are actively searching for the key to Koch's personality so that the right approach can be discovered to convince Koch to agree to allow Hostos to have what is Hostos' right to have: that is, facilities equal to those of any other unit of CUNY. Whatever may be the structure of Koch's personality (presuming he has one, that is), Koch is a successful politician and as such understands one thing--power. Hostos United/Hostos Unido is mobilizing the power to force Koch to allow Hostos to have 500 GC. This is how the building was obtained in the first place, this is how Hostos was saved in '75-76, and this is how we are going to keep 500 GC this year. Of course, this process involves negotiating and lobbying, but all the negotiating and lobbying in the world without the mobilization of the students, some faculty, and community is meaningless. The only people who won't admit this are those who are so far away from the entire process of fighting on behalf of Hostos that they can allow themselves to believe anything that is convenient for them to believe or those who have a stake in falsifying reality.

5. Q. How can I help secure 500 GC?

A. The most important thing is to utilize the building. "If we don't use it, we'll lose it." Teach your classes there. There may or may not be some inconvenience teaching in 500 GC depending on the nature of your class, its location, the time the class is taught. For example, for the evening students at 151st Street, any inconvenience that may obtain in 500 GC is trivial in comparison with those in that miserable facility. There is room for counselors and financial aid faculty to service students. Librarians could set-up and supervise a study area. Film programs, lectures, cultural events can all be effectively presented there. Simply visit 500 GC. The sad fact is that most faculty have yet to set foot inside the building.

We are beginning to get more media coverage. It is essential that they see classes in session, etc, I wish you could have seen the expression on the faces of the reporters from a radio station when they visited 500GC and saw students cleaning chairs that had arrived from the community.

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More Q's and A's About the Take-Over of 500 GC

6. Q. What effect has the Temporary President's memo of 4/10 had on the take-over?

A. Little or none. This Wednesday (4/12) was our busiest day--sixty classes were held in 500 GC. Based on an average class size of 25 that means that 1,500 students received instruction in that day in 500 GC. In fact, we have begun to have problems of success. One class had to be turned away for lack of space! Actually, when we obtain more chairs and blackboards, we will be able to expand the areas utilized for instruction to the fourth and fifth floors.

7. Q. What kind of media coverage has the takeover engendered?

A. Media <sup>coverage</sup> has been meager but not insignificant. Channel 5 devoted a four minute slot to the take-over, WPIX ran an editorial in support of Hostos' right to 500 GC. We secured a fifteen minute slot on WBLS (which was repeated) plus a one minute blurb which was repeated any number of times. ABC and WINS radio have had editorials about 500 GC. El Diario and the left-wing press have had articles about Hostos. We anticipate that upcoming events will ultimately attract the attention of the media to the take-over and hence to the question of the 500 GC.

8. Q. If the take-over of 500 GC eases Hostos' space problems and if this utilization attracts attention to Hostos' plight, why is the Temporary President and some departmental chairpeople trying to convince--or more accurately, subtly coerce-- those teachers who have been teaching there to leave 500 GC?

A. The Temporary President is an appointee of the BHE not an electee of the faculty, students, and community of Hostos. He thinks and acts accordingly. What is somewhat more difficult to understand is why many of the chairpeople-- who after all are members of the union and elected by their colleagues--are so anxious to follow the lead of the Temporary President. Indeed, at the council of chairpersons meeting of 4/13 one chairperson suggested the drawing up of a list of all those teachers who are teaching at 500 GC and the head of the library since 4/12 refused to allow amplification equipment to be used in 500 GC.

9. Q. What will be the effects of the subtle coercion of the Temporary President?

A. There are enough teachers who are committed sufficiently to Hostos that come-what-may 500 GC will continue to be utilized for instruction. Probably, some teachers will drift away. It is not totally inconceivable that some teachers will step forward in support of their colleagues and begin to teach in 500 GC.

The fear and/or the actuality that the subtle coercion of the Temporary President (abetted by some of the Chairpeople) may destroy the take-over and hence the assurance that Hostos will obtain the 500 GC will undoubtedly lead many students to conclude that: 1. the Temporary President and much of the faculty are not interested in Hostos; 2. more radical tactics must now be used. So, the Temporary President, and some of the chairpeople are themselves creating the conditions for the deja vu they so fear. They are, in fact, the creators of their own nightmares.

10. Q. Why shouldn't we wait until the University submits the master plan?

A. For any number of compelling reasons: 1. god only knows when the master plan will be presented; 2. when it is presented it will be knocked around for a long time; 3. there is no guarantee that Hostos will be in it; 4. the master plan will indicate that there are unutilized and underutilized facilities in Bronx Community College and Lehman. The University has lost 60,000 students and will most certainly continue to lose students. It should not take a genius to figure out that there are any number of people who would love to match up our bulging student population with someone else's un/underutilized facilities. The Master Plan for Constuction in the University will kill us. We must get 500 GC before the master plan is presented.

11. Q. If you--that is, the Temporary President and some of his Chairpeople-- are so anxious to end the take-over of 500 GC, what tactics and strategy have you developed and implemented to secure this facility for Hostos? What risks have you taken? What information have you shared? What efforts have you made?

USE IT OR LOSE

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