
CUNY Adjunct Alert

Vol. 1, No. 8

May 1998

Produced by *CUNY Adjuncts Unite!*
33 W 42nd St. NYC, NY 10036 room 400 212/642-2143

International Adjunct Conference A Success

Over the weekend of April 3 & 4, more than a hundred adjuncts, part-timers, non-tenure track full-timers, graduate TA's and sympathetic full-timers assembled at the CUNY Graduate Center for the Second Annual National Congress conference. After beginning with a screening of Barbara Wolf's elucidating documentary, *Degrees of Shame--Part-time Faculty: Migrant Workers of the Information Economy*, the "working conference" heard an opening keynote address by Cary Nelson of the University of Illinois/Champagne-Urbana and a closing keynote by Stanley Aronowitz of the GSUC. In between was squeezed a Plenary Panel made up of speakers from all over the U.S. and Canada, a half-dozen workshops (ranging in scope from "Building Coalitions & Full-timer/Part-timer alliances" and "Making Unions Responsive" to "Developing Regional Strategies" and "Making our Case to the Public") and several working caucuses. Among these latter was a caucus of which undertook the task of composing an official "Conference Statement" which identifies who we are and what are our various concerns, describes conditions external to the academy responsible for the current conditions, and proposes visions for the future and strategies for getting there. The conference wrapped up with resolutions from the floor formally establishing the Congress (to be renamed in the near future) as an organization, and forming an official steering committee, as well as choosing Boston as the host city for the 1999 conference. The weekend concluded with a whiz-bang party at the Brecht Forum that went into the wee hours of the morning. The post-conference cyber-buzz has been extremely favorable. Indeed, the conference was a great beginning.

Deadline Alert! Good News: Adjuncts are joining the union in increasing numbers. To be eligible to vote in any PSC election, including the upcoming contract vote, however, one must be a member for four months prior to the distribution of ballots. With contract negotiations on-going, therefore, it is possible that those adjuncts submitting yellow cards now may be able to vote for the upcoming contract. So keep those cards coming into the PSC. SIGN UP TODAY!

Adjuncts to Hold PSC Referendum

At our April meeting, *CUNY Adjuncts Unite!* Voted to hold a referendum within the PSC next year. The specific elements and timing of the referendum will be determined in meetings over the summer. We expect to have the cooperation of a number of full-timers in this effort and they are invited to contact us about participating in the development process.

The kinds of issues that might be in the referendum include: reduction in dues for part-timers, making the PSC Vice-President for Part-time Affairs a full-time position elected by the part-timers alone, enforcing the agency fee for part-timers, and hiring a full-time union organizer to mobilize adjuncts.

In order to get a referendum on a PSC ballot, we will

need to collect close to 1,000 signatures from union members. This will serve as an incentive for adjuncts to join the union and get involved with *CAU!* If you're interested in this effort give us a call or come to the May meeting at Hunter College.

Funding Alert! *CAU!* is in need of financial assistance to help offset the costs of its organizing efforts, especially the printing of the *CUNY Adjunct Alert*. For this effort to continue we must have your financial support. Contributions in any amount may be made to *CAU!* c/o Doctoral Students' Council, CUNY GSUC, 25 West 43rd St, Room 400, NY, NY 10036.

Adjuncts & Pensions

According to a PSC document:

All adjuncts who are not presently contributing to or receiving a pension from a New York State or New York City retirement system are eligible to join the New York City Teachers' Retirement System (TRS).

Under Section 219(g) of the Internal Revenue Code, as amended by the Tax Reform Act of 1986, employees that are deemed "active participants" in defined benefit pension plans are not eligible fully to deduct

contributions

cont'd on next page

Adjuncts & Pensions Cont'd

to IRA's if their adjusted gross income exceeds certain limits (\$40,000 in the case of individuals filing joint returns and \$25,000 in the case of individual returns). Under the IRS rulings and regulations, City employees who are eligible to participate in the New York City Teachers' Retirement System (TRS) are deemed to be "active participants" in a pension plan whether or not they actually elected to participate in TRS. Therefore the City is obliged to check the box on each employee's form W-2 indicating to the IRS that he/she is a participant in a defined pension plan.

And also:

A tax deferred annuity plan is available for adjuncts who are not presently contributing to a TDA. Available plans: TIAA/CREF-SRA, TRS-TDA and HRC.

And finally:

All adjuncts who have been teaching ten (10) consecutive semesters in the same department at one CUNY college are eligible for a tuition waiver. One course of undergraduate or graduate allowed per semester. [This includes GSUC tuition].

The rules and criteria governing pension plans for adjuncts are many and complicated. Interested adjuncts should inquire at the Personnel Office on their campus, where applications and info packets should be available. For further information, contact Clarissa Gilbert Weiss, PSC Director of Pension & Welfare Benefits (212/354-1252).

**Come to the Next Meeting of
CUNY Adjuncts Unite!
Thurs., May 28th 4:30pm
Hunter College
Room: TBA
Lexington Ave & 68th St**

Calendar of Upcoming Events

[To be listed, info must be received by the third Friday of the month]

- May 16 4pm: Board of Trustees Hearing (535 E 80th St)
- May 19 6pm: Univ. Fac. Senate (GSUC--Auditorium)
- May 23 4:30pm: Board of Trustees Mtg (535 E 80th St)
- May 28 7:15pm: PSC Delegate Assembly (GSUC--Room 207)

??
Letters to the editor may cover any subject germane to CUNY adjuncts. All letters must be typewritten, signed, and between 100-250 words. Letters may be edited to fit the allotted space.
??

Letter to the Editor
[edited to fit allotted space]

I believe we should ask the Teamsters, another CUNY bargaining agent, to organize and represent adjuncts. PSC is a "company union" whose main goal is defense of full-time tenured positions. Adjuncts are "out of the loop" and ill-favored, as one tenured faculty member confided to me, because we represent a threat to their jobs and tenure. So why are we in their union?

For the past two years, I've attended PSC delegate meetings. Prior to that, I participated, along with citywide adjuncts, in meetings with PSC executives to discuss upcoming contract negotiations. We put a lot on the table: parity pay, an office hour, improved benefits, etc. Certainly we did not expect everything but "promises" were made.

At the March PSC delegate's meeting, it was reported that the negotiations continue and that part of the package would be a "lump sum payment to everyone." Did that mean adjuncts also, asked a full-time, tenured delegate. No, said President Polishook. So that isn't "everyone" is it? 500 adjuncts, dues-paying members of the PSC (out of 6000+ CUNY adjuncts) [both of those figures are considerably higher today. -Ed.] will shortly learn that the "office hour" has been negotiated away, "health benefits" will be cut again. Parity pay? For adjuncts? Out of the question! So we are "out of the loop," so to speak, once again.

Why a "company union"? A resolution presented by PSC executive council contained language so conciliatory that it appeared to greet the CAP with open arms (if tenured jobs were protected). Fortunately, several delegates were able to revise the resolution into a unified declaration against the hastily drawn CAP. I would hope that CAP does not pass. It will be devastating to students and faculty alike but more so to the future workforce of New York City. With an education, some of us are still at the bottom. Without an education, an endless pit will develop and our fair city will be soaked in rebellion.

Let me reiterate. A promise made by PSC is a promise broken. WE must seek another bargaining agent.

Why do I suggest the teamsters instead of DC 37? Muscle. Just plain muscle. Teamsters, historically, have been able to achieve for their members what others only dream of. Perhaps a new "dress code" for adjuncts under the Teamster label will emerge. So, adios to the PSC. And watch it, PSC execs! Even full-time tenured faculty, I've noticed, are beginning to wonder why it has taken over 2 years not to negotiate a contract!

-Sylvia Rackow

CUNY Adjuncts Unite! Contacts

Baruch	Jim Feast	718-449-0677
BMCC	Shirley Rausher	212-721-0099
Bronx CC	Ingrid Hughes	212-254-0635
Brooklyn	Vinny Tirelli	212-642-2143
CCNY	Rob Wallace	212-650-8179
CSI	Harry Cason	212-838-1374
Hostos	Anna Lopez	212-427-3874
Hunter	Mark Halling	212-254-7997
Hunter Soc.	Susanna Jones	718-243-0660
John Jay	Michael Seitz	212-229-9180
Kingsborough CC	Jerry Karol	718-330-0916
LaGuardia	Costas Panayotakis	718-852-2069
Lehman	Kyle Cuordileone	212-491-2653
Medgar Evers	Eric Lehman	212-674-1767
NYC Tech.	Wendy Scribner	212-982-0097
Queens	Eric Marshall	212-642-2143
Queensborough CC	Howard Pflanzner	212-496-7452
York	Mike Vozick	212-874-7650