

An Appeal to the Faculty to Vote for a Strike

You are probably aware that the PSC will soon be asking its members to vote in a strike referendum. A strike at the City University would be a serious matter, and it should not be entered upon lightly. Nonetheless, we are convinced that the crisis now facing CUNY is of such magnitude that failure to vote for a strike could have disastrous consequences for us all.

We need not dwell on the immediate effects of the budget cuts now being implemented. You are surely aware of the pattern, although it varies somewhat from campus to campus: mass firings of adjuncts, increased workloads for full-time faculty, increased fees for students, cancellation of courses, curtailment in purchases of supplies, shortening of library hours, and so on, and on. In our view these consequences alone justify a strike to preserve the academic integrity of the university.

As adjuncts we are, perhaps, biased in favor of strong action. Large numbers of us have lost or stand to lose our only source of employment. Many of us are graduate students or recent Ph.D.'s unable to find full-time positions in the present job market. We hope that you will seriously consider the human cost of the sacrifice of the adjuncts--more is involved here than the burdens of teaching an extra course.

Have you also considered carefully the long-range consequences of accepting an increase in workload? This is one of the most dangerous concessions that can be made by the faculty or the union. Acceptance of an increased workload will set a precedent which will be extremely difficult to reverse. Even a salary reduction would be preferable, since it would be easier to renegotiate under more favorable circumstances.

Accepting this increase will not put an end to concessions. If these reductions are allowed to go through, the faculty will be demoralized and the union so weakened that we will be defenseless against additional impositions. If the BHE is allowed to get away with this illegal and unilateral violation of the PSC contract, it will be encouraged to follow up its triumph with further aggressions against the faculty. If these reductions are successfully imposed, the city and state will continue to view CUNY as a prime target for budget cuts. Further reductions will lead directly to the dismissal of full-time faculty. This is not an alarmist prediction. The prospect of this happening is very real in the light of the city's financial crisis. The mayor has already approved, but the BHE not yet implemented, another \$32 million reduction. According to the PSC this new cut will lead to the dismissal of 1,500 full-time faculty. Up until now adjuncts have provided a "safety cushion" for full-time faculty--the use of adjuncts as a "reserve labor force" has kept the full-time faculty from feeling the most serious effects of the cuts. But now that we are going, you may be next.

We hope that the workload increases can be rescinded without a strike, although the prospects of this happening appear dim. Even without a strike, an affirmative strike vote will strengthen the PSC's negotiating position. This is no time for weakness and disunity. Vote yes on a strike referendum!

--The Adjunct Faculty Association