



WCCFT *Union* NEWS

March 2006

Monthly Newsletter of The Westchester Community College Federation of Teachers

We've Got a Deal !

The terms of the contract agreed to by the Union and the Administration are as follows. All else in the contract remains the same. The effective dates for the agreement are September 1, 2004 to August 31, 2008. All increases are retroactive to September 1, 2004. The contract was unanimously approved at the March general membership meeting.



- ▶ *4 year contract at 3% a year from Sept. 1, 2004.*
- ▶ *No change in health plan.*
- ▶ *\$10,000 in additional faculty development money.*
- ▶ *Right of Academic Support Center Coordinators to apply for sabbaticals.*
- ▶ *At 18 years, with no prior sabbatical leave, a full year at full pay.*
- ▶ *A phased-in increase in compensation for clinical and laboratory hours currently paid at 80% in the following plan:*

2004-2005: 80%
2005-2006: 85%
2006-2007: 85%
2007-2008: 90%

▶ *A model for post-tenure review to be submitted by December 31, 2006.*

▶ *Right of Associate Deans to review student evaluations.*



A standing-room-only crowd celebrates the ratification of a new contract



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Calendar of Events

Monthly Meetings:

First Wednesday, 11:00 a.m.
Science Building 102

March 24-25, 2006:

NYSUT Higher Ed Conf.,
Crown Plaza, White Plains

April 3, 2006:

Report of the Watchdogs

April 19, 2006:

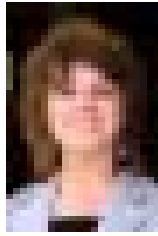
New Faculty Luncheon

May 2-5, 2006:

NYSUT Representative
Assembly, Rochester, NY

May 5, 2006:

Committee Meetings



President's Message

Time for a Climate Change

We are pleased that negotiations for the 2004-2008 collective bargaining agreement have ended and consider the new contract a positive settlement in many ways. But before we take a rest, we need to assess where we've been and where we'd like to be. Although we won't sit down at the table for probably two years, it's time to think about future talks and begin to sort out issues and lay a foundation for improving the working conditions for all bargaining unit members right now.

First, we need to start with an accurate picture of the productivity and integrity of faculty. There is no place for demands which aim to extract more time and energy from teachers, librarians, counselors and academic support center coordinators when increases in the number of students served and the quality of that service can be easily documented. Any list of demands premised on distrust of faculty's commitment should not be proposed.

Second, all demands should be presented in the context of problems that require solution. If we are to negotiate in good faith, demands should be accompanied by clear verification of need so that nothing is on the table as a purely political move. There is a school of bargaining called interest-based or mutual gains or win-win, but whatever we call it, talks must begin with the idea of focusing on the interests underlying the issues.

Third, all parties must be willing to share relevant bargaining information. It is unthinkable to address financial matters without adequate and accurate data on the financial situation of the College; anything less causes suspicion and delay in reaching agreement.

Fourth, as a College and a Union we must discuss honestly the increased reliance on adjunct faculty and the status of adjunct faculty at Westchester Community College. The Union is dedicated

to improving the conditions under which adjunct faculty work and will not allow this issue to become divisive within the Local. It will not be a question of trading off gains for full-timers with losses for adjuncts or the reverse. We are one bargaining unit and will move forward as one unit.

Finally, collective bargaining is the culmination of all Union work on behalf of the membership. This includes handling grievances, securing a safe and healthy workplace, advancing faculty development and lobbying for positive legislation in higher education. If every Step II grievance procedure is an automatic denial, there will be little good will at the bargaining table. If concerns over indoor air quality are disregarded, we cannot hope to change the atmosphere of negotiations.

We have just completed the first contract under Plan C. Let's build on this settlement in all areas of labor management relations at Westchester Community College for the benefit of everyone.

*"it's time to think
about future talks
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right now."*



Watchdog Training

Saturday, April 29th 2006

9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. with Ed Olmstead

Nationally Recognized Industrial Hygienist

No Rights, All Wrongs

By Richard Rosell

On February 5th, in reaction to correspondence the union distributed to our members, President Hankin sent us an e-mail to “remind” us that in “in personnel and collective bargaining issues, as in so many others, there are always two sides to every question, and that as members of an academic community, we owe it to ourselves “to listen to all sides before coming to a definitive conclusion about any of these matters.”

Yet, despite his plea that we keep an open mind and listen to all sides, President Hankin failed to share his views, claiming that some unnamed law prevents him from doing so. How can we consider his side, if he does not share it with us? Secrecy inevitably undermines confidence and may lead some to infer that he has something to hide.

At the time the president wrote his e-mail, there was only one communication from the union regarding a personnel matter. It was a letter decrying the suspension of a member of the English department with 15 years of service and an unblemished record. Here is a summary of the letter:

1. The administration suspended a faculty member from teaching without warning, explanation or investigation. The teacher was called to Associate Dean Wang’s office and told he was barred from teaching for the rest of the fall semester. (He continues to be barred from teaching this semester as well.)

2. The union met with Dr. Hankin, who told us he was away from the campus when the suspension occurred, but approved it during a telephone conversation with members of his administration. He told the union that he did not investigate the facts of the case nor did he request a report upon his return to the college.

3. At the suggestion of Dr. Hankin, the union met with Acting Dean Glusker and Associate Dean Wang, who stated the suspension was a reaction to student

complaints about the professor’s teaching style and a claim that the teacher insulted one student. They could not provide evidence to substantiate any of their claims and stated that they had not directed the complaining students to meet with the teacher, as required, when the complaints arose.

4. The administration failed to follow any of the due process procedures required by the collective bargaining agreement and the 1983 memo on discipline before the suspension occurred. (To date no charges or evidence of wrong doing have been proffered by the administration despite repeated requests from the union. The administration has told the union *it will only reveal the information if required to do so by an arbitrator.*)

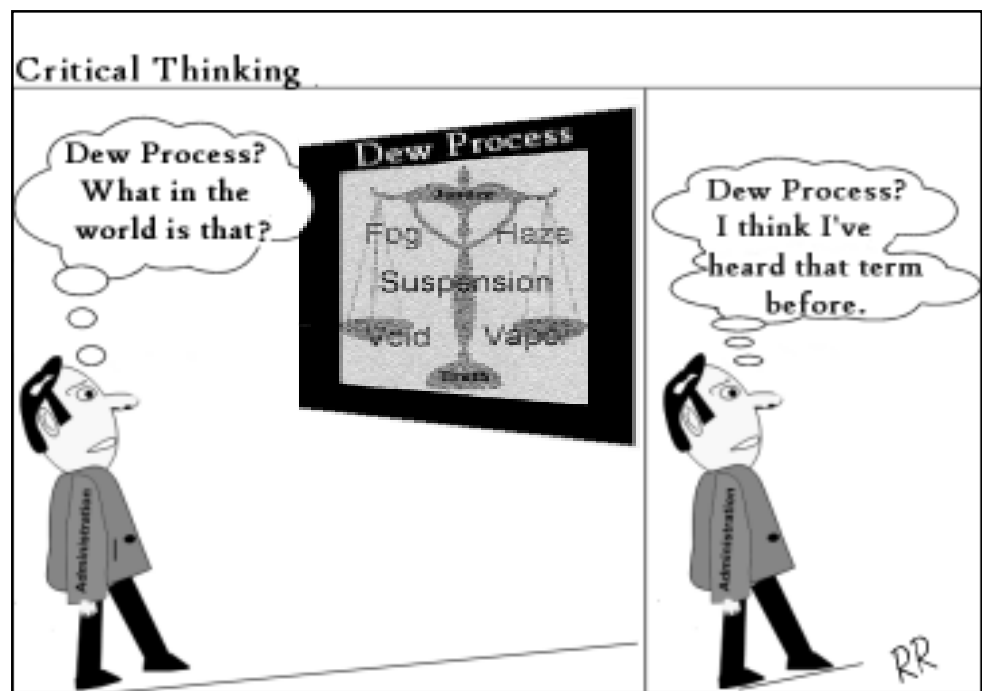
Due process, as defined in the contract (section 3.7 i), requires that an individual be informed *in writing* of the charges against him/her so a defense can be prepared. One can only imagine why the administration chooses to be so secretive. One possibility is that there is no credible evidence of wrong doing. The union has maintained from the beginning that the decision to suspend the English professor was the result of a rush to judgment, based on hearsay and rumor. Continued administrative silence only lends credence to that posi-

tion.

In his e-mail president Hankin states that “To be less than fully informed, and to rely on the interpretation of only one side, is less than appropriate in our academic setting, and is doing the entire institution a disservice.” We agree. But, the president must understand, it is impossible to consider his side of the issue *if he refuses to share his side with us.* Furthermore, he must recognize that *his decision not to relinquish any evidence, documents or information, until an arbitrator requires him to do so,* denies the suspended teacher what he needs to defend himself. The president’s decision to withhold the information does an even greater disservice to the institution, because it suggests that power trumps individual, due process rights. The president’s e-mail suggests that he is the victim. In truth, it is the other way round.

Therefore, in the interests of the institution and individual rights, we ask the president to reconsider his present course and to share all relevant information with the suspended teacher and the union so we can review it in our efforts to bring this matter to a speedy resolution. If the president is faithful to the principles he asks us to follow, he will do no less.

(All relevant documents are available online at www.wccft.org)



Private Sector, Public Concern

By Richard Rodriguez

The *Wall Street Journal* was in a gloating mood recently. Their headline clucked, “Unions pay dearly for success.” The Bureau of Labor Statistics had just released figures showing that union membership in the private sector has steadily declined from its high of 24.2% in the 1970s to only 7.8% in 2004. In other words, roughly one out of four private sector workers belonged to a union 30 years ago, compared to less than one in twelve today! In the *Journal’s* simplistic accounting, this decline is the inevitable product of unions’ success over that period of time. American unions have literally priced themselves right out of business, crows the *Journal*, compared to the cheap labor available in the new markets opened up by globalization.

As an individual who labored soullessly in the business world for better than 25 years before coming here to WCC, I can understand the *Journal’s* posture. Over the years, I was exposed to the entire litany of arguments that stem from anti-union sentiment: the declining American work ethic, the increasing sense of worker entitlement (if not outright greed), the endemic corruption in the ranks of union management, the lack of corporate esprit de corps or understanding of competitive pressure and shareholder interests, and so forth. I even learned to appreciate some of these arguments.

But I fall far short of sharing the *schadenfreude* with which the *Journal* delivers its report. On the contrary, I view the trend (and it is a trend: “In the immediate future, unions will carry on shriveling in the private sector,” according to Harvard economist Richard Freeman) with increasing alarm. How far can union membership “shrivel” from 7.8%? Have we reached the end of an era? Have unions outlived their purpose in our global 21st century society?

Those questions to me are not as urgent as the following one: what happens in the *vacuum* created by the lack of a healthy, robust union movement? It takes no PhD in Physics to answer that question. And one need not look all the way back to the early 20th century era of Upton Sinclair’s *Jungle* to know the kinds of abuses that management can heap upon a labor body when unchecked by an organized labor force. A more recent business “success” story

— the Wal-Mart corporation — provides all the evidence we need. (And in our April issue, our colleague Richard Courage will be reviewing that evidence: stay tuned.)

But Wal-Mart, of course, is just the tip of the iceberg. An AFL-CIO broad-

a public sector union, it may be tempting to dismiss the problem as someone else’s headache. Our domain, after all, is relatively healthy, with current public sector union membership remaining robust at more than 35%. Besides, we uneasily reflect, there is something almost unfashionable in academic circles about the topic of labor today, and its corollary of class relations. Labor, once the *cause celebre* of the liberal establishment, has become more like the neglected step-child. And academic debate about labor has acquired the whiff of yesterday’s news as our liberal



side notes that one out of four American adults work full time but earn poverty level wages! (That figure becomes even more egregious when one notes that in 2004, the poverty threshold for a household of four was set at an absurdly low \$18,900.) And ever since the infamous El Monte sweatshop expose of 1995, the Department of Labor has needed to keep a close watch on the proliferation of worker’s rights violations in a variety of industries. Meanwhile, the chasm between middle class and poor continues to widen. (See accompanying chart.) It’s not a bad time to ask ourselves collectively if this is the kind of society we have been building toward since the earliest days of the labor movement, and whether we are ready to give up so easily the gains earned at such great sacrifice over the course of the last century.

As members of

sympathies have become tuned in the last few decades to a more urgent frequency: the horizon of race, ethnicity and gender, where the struggle for fairness and justice is seemingly even more pressing. But the opposition, of course, is a false one, since many of the victims on both sides of that divide are one and the same: women, immigrants, and other minorities who are forced to accept the harshest working conditions no one else would tolerate.

Unions boost salaries

A study published by the National Bureau of Economic Research confirms what AFT has been saying all along: unionization and collective bargaining help to increase the salaries of both blue-collar and white-collar workers on college campuses.

The study shows that professors as well as campus workers in nine different occupations were between 15 percent and 17 percent more when they were represented by unions.

The evidence supports the AFT’s argument that workers at higher education institutions should form unions in order to achieve better pay. The study may be found online at www.aft.org/papers/w0504.

*Another change at the union you all... success, happiness and a good future life!