



THE CORTLAND CAUSE

Volume 34, Issue 2
October 2008

Special points of interest:

- Tribute to Jo Schaffer
- COCAL Report
- Why join UUP

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SAVE THE DATE!
UUP Annual Holiday Party
Friday, December 5
4-7 pm
Corey Union Exhibition Lounge

President's Column:

VANITY NAMING

—Larry Ashley



Gee , the world is changing, isn't it? I have become an old fuddy-duddy by insensible degrees while still cherishing an image of myself as downright revolutionary. I think of Andy Rooney on *60 Minutes* who used to end every episode with a rant on something or other. I really don't want to end up that way, but the temptations are enormous. What the hell...go for it! Here is my rant.

"The House That Ruth Built." That's what we used to call Yankee stadium. And tennis honors its greats — "Ashe Stadium," "Billie Jean King National Tennis Center," "Roland Garros Stadium" (I know, Garros was a great aviator which was why the French also named an airport after him).

When I cast my mind's eye over the buildings and public spaces our society names, it seems they are named after either people, locales, the team or (now) corporations. So if we just take NFL stadia, we have

- ◆ the people-stadia [Lambeau field, Paul Brown Stadium, Ralph Wilson Stadium],
- ◆ the locale-stadia [Texas Stadium, The Georgia Dome, Jacksonville Stadium],
- ◆ the team-stadia [Dolphin Stadium, Sun-Devil Stadium, Giants Stadium],
- ◆ and by FAR the most numerous,

the corporate-stadia [Invesco Field, Lincoln Financial Field, FedEx Field, Gillette Stadium, etc.].

Soldier Field is the only NFL stadium that does not fit in this scheme (in case you were wondering, Monster Park is named for a corporate entity). Maybe you think only the earlier stadia were named after legends or teams, but Paul Brown Stadium was opened within the last ten years and the Bengals decided not to sell the naming rights to the stadium but to honor their founder.

We could do the same survey on baseball stadia and the results would, I think, be similar. We are seeing a general transition to corporate name-purchasing everywhere.

For comparison, walk the grassy swards of college campuses. You will find there a monument to past greats (people-buildings, like Mandel Hall at U. of Chicago, Clinton Hall at SUNY Albany, etc.), "teams" (Performing Arts Center at Albany, "science centers", "Education Buildings" galore), a few locale names for collections of buildings (North quad, West Campus, etc.) and a modest number of corporate-buildings, especially in the technical and scientific areas, like the Varian Physics Building at Stanford. Last year there was a big controversy over whether the University of Iowa

I doubt that
in the future
we will
name any
new
buildings
for our
historically
significant
contributors

I am hereby
selling the
name of my
house to the
highest
bidder

would rename its College of Public Health “Wellmark College” in honor of Wellmark Blue Cross/Blue Shield’s major contribution to the institution’s wallet. The faculty voted “no.”

So what about SUNY Cortland? So far, we have a rather traditional set of building names. The Dowd Fine Arts Building was named for Ruth Dowd in honor of her contributions to the college. Think of “Chugger Davis” Field. Think of the College Presidents who are honored with Building names...Moffett and DeGroat, for example.

I love the academic tradition of honoring our major institutional landmarks by naming them for those who helped define us. It is part of a system in which we don’t pursue the careers we do for personal monetary gain so much as for recognition by other scholars and toilers in our institutional vineyard. And now on to the rant.

The new trend is to raise money from wealthy individuals by giving them NAMING PRIVILEGES in recognition of their major financial contributions. They need not ever have stepped on the campus. They need only yearn for name recognition. This trend is so strong that I doubt that in the future we will name any new buildings for our historically significant contributors, but only for our funding champions. It is, I think, open to anyone to contribute to the college in return for the naming privilege. We might, for example, in the future build an extension to the Fine Arts building which may be called the Lindsey Lohan Center for the Fine Arts. Communications, a large department, may someday need a building all to itself...the Rush Limbaugh Center for Communications Studies?

Now this would not be happening except for the fact that public universities are losing their state funding and are forced to fundraise on a large scale in order to survive. How else can colleges induce the wealthy to give? But we correspondingly erase yet another distinctive feature of college campuses as we steadily replace our environment with descriptors that reflect not our history and traditions but instead our financial exigency. And I should not have restricted this analysis to public institutions, as Harvard renamed its “North House” the “Pforzheimer House” in return for a Pforzheimer grant, which led to cheeky institutional banners like “Pfreshmen Welcome” and other linguistic laments. And Harvard’s most famous dropout, Bill Gates, has named a building with a family name in return for a major grant.

Wait a minute! I shouldn’t rail against this trend...I should exploit it! I have an office here and certainly I’m not well paid, as the state’s financial problems have steadily moved SUNY salaries well down the comparative tables. So how about this? I’m willing to name my office for anyone who gives me or my department an enabling grant of a few K. Oh, sorry admin, I forgot that I don’t own that space but only inhabit it for academic purposes.

But wait again! I suddenly remember that the British have a long tradition of naming their private homes with cutesy little names: The Hideaway in Bristol, for example. In fact, one of my stepchildren lives in such a named house: “Rossall, Sandown Rd., Sandwich, Kent” is the mailing address, where “Rossall” is the name of the house. I am hereby selling the name of my house to the highest bidder. Just contact me at: The AT&T House, West Court Street, Cortland, NY. ■



**UUP urges you
to exercise your right to
VOTE
on
Tuesday, November 4**

It’s YOUR Newsletter!

We welcome articles and letters submitted by members of the SUNY-Cortland Community. Please share your thoughts with us—we want to hear from you!

Opinions expressed in *The Cortland Cause* are those of the individuals and are neither endorsed by nor represent the views of UUP.

Send contributions to the Editor, Karla Alwes (English, 112-B Old Main, alwesk@cortland.edu) AND to the Chapter Office, B-18A Old Main, uup@cortland.edu

Deadline for the next issue—October 22



Editor's Corner:

CORTLAND'S ELEVEN

—**Karla Alwes**
English

I don't think it's The Year of the Woman. That national event occurred in 1992, when four (!) women became US Senators. Lately, though, I have been thinking about the representation and visibility of women on a campus such as ours whose students are predominantly female.

A presentation I have often given on campus regarding the use and origins of sexist language, titled "Throwing Like a Girl/Thinking Like a Man," has made me a "program" for the campus residence halls. During the presentation, I ask the student audience why they think every office secretary and keyboard specialist on this campus is female. (I also ask them why the buttons on men's shirts are on the opposite side of the buttons on women's shirts—that's for another time.) To the secretary question, the men of the audience typically respond "because men don't know how to type." To which I reply: "If the job started at \$50,000 a year, do you think men would learn how to type?" Thus, a new layer is introduced into the old typing question.

As I have noted in this column before, language is powerful. It forms our ideas, which in turn form our realities. And so much of our language, and our reality, is gender-based.

Just this year our union, United University Professions, finally added recognition of International Women's Day on the UUP calendar that our members receive annually. For as long as I have been a member of UUP, I have seen the recognition of almost every important group and event, national and international, except for this one. This has always been strange to me because the day is the remembrance of an event that helped recognize and reinforce the need for unions for factory workers (i.e. the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire, which killed immigrant women and girls who were locked in by the management, and thus had to jump from windows to try to escape. Or remain behind and die from smoke.) When I asked Chapter President Larry Ashley last year why this day was not recognized on the calendar, he discovered that it was apparently just an oversight. While some UUP members surely do observe Ramadan, which has always been noted on the calendar, many more would be affected by the observance of International Women's Day, especially on SUNY campuses that are predominantly female, as so many

are. It is certainly not my suggestion that anyone overtly ignored International Women's Day. It is merely a reminder that women (*qua* women) tend to be invisible when it comes to the issue of diversity.

In 1996 I wrote a column for this newsletter about the paucity of full professors on this campus (and surely on other campuses) who are women. There were ten at that time. I counted again recently, and discovered the number has grown to twenty-one (based on data from 2007-08, and not including emeritae). In eleven years we have added eleven full professors who are women. It is indeed The Year of the Woman. Again. ■



**Open Letter to New
Colleagues &
Agency-Fee Payers:**

**UNIONS, UUP, AND THE
UNIVERSITY****

—**Henry Steck**
Political Science

For well over a generation, the right-wing in America has sought – successfully so – to weaken labor unions in every possible way: by restrictive rulings by the NLRB, by the aggressive and mean-spirited tactics of law-firms that specialize in union-busting, by resistance in Congress and state legislatures to legislation that would put union organizing on a level playing field with management, and more. Not least of the efforts has been to de-legitimize unions and "dis" them, so to speak. I was reminded of this by the use of the term "union bosses" during the Republican convention – Larry Ashley, a union "boss"? I was reminded of it by the flow of talk about "corrupt" union bosses — as if Enron and various CEO's weren't doing the perp walk almost daily. More gently, some will say that unions may have been okay in the 1930s, but no longer since each and every person could get their piece of the American dream by their own talents — the well-known code of American individualism.

The efforts are not without effect. Between 1983 and 2007, the percent of employed workers in unions dropped from 20.1% to 12.1% — about 15.7 million workers. (*continued on page 9*)

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***Editor's Note: This is a revision of an article first published by Bruce Atkins and Henry Steck in 1989. We reprint it now – with some revision – nearly twenty years later, for the benefit of new colleagues, agency fee payers, and, in fact, all members of the bargaining unit.*

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**gains for
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unless the
union
insists on
presenting
them as first
priority**

**Participa-
tion in
faculty
governance
is essential
to our cause**

SOMEWHERE OVER THE RAINBOW MAY BE CLOSER THAN WE THOUGHT

—Anne Wiegard and Ross Borden
English

For two days in August, we attended the heady 2008 conference of COCAL (Coalition of Contingent Academic Labor) as part of a nine-person delegation from UUP that included President Phil Smith. From August 8-10, participants from all over the U.S., Canada and Mexico gathered at San Diego State to share information and ideas. We came home invigorated by the solidarity of brothers and sisters committed to winning equity for contingent faculty. While this article must be brief, we'd be delighted to send you any or all of the delegation's reports.

Many discussions focused on the gains in California, Canada and elsewhere that some faculty unions achieved years ago and that others have achieved in the past two or three: pro rata salaries, usually \$5000 per course or more; continuing appointments after six years of successful evaluations, for part-time as well as full-time contingents; step increases for experienced employees in addition to annual across-the-board raises; and appointment sequences for awarding additional work to current employees, so that part-time positions become full-time ones when the work is available.

We were interested to learn, for example, that the Memorandum of Understanding between UC and the University Council-AFT prohibits any administrative cap on the number of contingent faculty who may earn continuing appointments.



Above: Anne Wiegard and Ross Borden (first and second from bottom right corner) and other COCAL delegates listen intently as Mexican activist, Arturo Ramos Perez (speaking through his translator, a contingent faculty member from California) discusses the relationship of globalization and the growing percentage of contingent faculty in higher education in the Americas.

—Photo by Conference Co-Host David Milroy

Here are some highlights of our information gathering:

- ◆ As the eminent Canadian labor organizer Victoria Smallman emphasized, gains for contingent faculty cannot be won at the bargaining table unless the union insists on presenting them as its first priority. To achieve change at this level, the union must take the position that nothing else can be negotiated until the wages and terms of employment for contingent faculty are settled.
- ◆ More and more frequently, faculty unions are organizing to strike when management refuses to negotiate essential reforms. In studying this history, it became clear to us that by prohibiting strikes by NY state employees, the Taylor Law has deprived UUP of the right to organize effectively. The achievements of other faculty unions are evidence of this, and they might well have a probative value in court. After decades of working in good faith with the Taylor Law, UUP may now be in a position to challenge it, either in concert with the Professional Staff Congress/CUNY or separately, on the grounds that many of our members have been systematically exploited under the current law.
- ◆ Since contingent employees are contingent by definition, they do not have “a reasonable assurance of work,” and they are therefore entitled to unemployment insurance during breaks in employment, including winter and summer breaks. This right was established in California as a result of the 1989 Cervisi Decision. PSC/CUNY is seeking to establish the same right in NY through the state legislature. At the representative assembly this July, AFT resolved to find a way of modifying the federal labor law that exempts higher ed employees from UI and that is interpreted by each state in its own way. Meanwhile, with the assistance of AFT, AAUP, and NEA, Joe Berry of Chicago COCAL has published *Access to Unemployment Insurance Benefits for Contingent Faculty*.
- ◆ As Jil Hanifan, member from Albany and newly appointed co-chair of the statewide UUP Part-Time Concerns Committee, writes in her report of the conference, “Participation in faculty governance is essential to our cause. One consequence of the reliance on contingent academics is that the ‘service’ obligations for tenure-line faculty increases, becoming ever more burdensome and distracting,

and this creates divisions among members and hard feelings toward part-time and other contingent faculty — blaming the victims of divisive administrative policies, as opposed to working together. Faculty governance is a place where contingent faculty can usefully contribute to ongoing policy discussions and where we can demonstrate a) that our concerns are rooted in our commitment to quality at our institutions and in our disciplines and b) that as contingents, our issues are neither 'special' nor 'local' but are deeply implicated in almost every aspect of college/university life."

- ◆ Beth Wilson, member from New Paltz, summarized the meaning of the conference this way: "It is essential to move the issue of equity for adjuncts to the center of UUP's agenda, rather than treating it as an after-

thought, or as just one in a long string of various demands. Just as the Teamsters did in the UPS strike of 1997, it is crucial for us to take a principled, united stand in opposition to the abuses of part-timers if we are to make any headway with the state on behalf of the union and of public higher education as a whole."

From our perspective, the conference's most concrete accomplishment was the formation of a Northeast COCAL organizing committee, of which we are members. Phil Smith endorsed this initiative with a pledge of UUP's support, and NYSUT offered to share its resources. COCAL-NE will meet in convention in the off-years of the national conference, more frequently in committees as geography and weather permit, and week by week through electronic communications. Please join this effort to restore the integrity of higher education by contacting one of us and adding your name to our new list-serve. ■



At left: Delegates from New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut met to discuss plans for COCAL -Northeast. From left to right: Anne Wiegard (Cortland), Steve Street (Buffalo State), Tony Wildman (NYSUT), and Phil Smith (UUP President).

—Photo by Peter Brown



Above: Members of the UUP COCAL delegation head out to continue discussion of contingent faculty issues over dinner after a long day of meetings. From left to right: Peter Brown (New Paltz), Ross Borden (Cortland), Jil Hanifan (Albany; new co-chair of the statewide PTCC), Beth Wilson (New Paltz), Kay Branagan (Plattsburgh), and Steve Street (Buffalo State).

— Photo by Anne Wiegard

It is essential to move the issue of equity for adjuncts to the center of UUP's agenda

Please join this effort to restore the integrity of higher education

I would love
to see our
local union
give this the
impetus it
needs

the whole
business of
teachers
being
appraised
by students
is absurd



IT'S ALL ABOUT GETTING HERE

—Ellen McCabe
Library

I was really excited when I heard about the NYS-Ride option for the use of public transportation—and really discouraged when I realized it did not apply to me. Since I commute on a daily basis from Binghamton, there is no feasible public transportation to use. I did check the Greyhound bus schedule once again and it gave me the following choices: Leave at 4:40 AM and arrive at 5:30 AM or leave at 11:00 AM and arrive at 11:50 AM for my approximately nine-to-five day. The last bus back to Binghamton leaves at 3:50 PM from Cortland. Round trip fare is \$24.00. Train travel is non-existent (are you listening, Senator Libous?) and has been for quite some time. Although, I will note, it was quite a viable means of transportation during the 1950s, bringing lots of students up to Cortland.

I have carpooled for several years with two other academic faculty, one from the School of Education and one from the School of Arts and Sciences. Obviously our schedules don't always coincide, since I am a librarian and have to keep regular hours at the library, and they both have had varying teaching and supervision schedules. However, we have done the best we can, bending our schedules as necessary to accommodate each other's needs and I have every hope that we will continue to do so. This has

certainly been a help with gas usage. Others are not so lucky.

With so many of our faculty coming from such locations as Binghamton, Ithaca and Syracuse, I am rather surprised that no one on campus has set up a carpooling message board. This could be a combination of a physical and/or virtual board where parties interested in carpooling could list the location they are traveling from/to, their times of arrival/departure and whether they are smoking or non-smoking commuters (I found out that this last item can be very important).

Couldn't this be something that UUP could initiate? I think we're all concerned with our carbon footprint, the price of gas and its effect on all Americans, and our dependence on foreign oil. I would love to see our local union give this the impetus it needs and create some more feasible transportation for us all.

Chapter President's note: At the campus Labor-Management meeting on September 12, UUP and the campus administration agreed to expand the charge of the campus's Parking and Carpooling Labor-Management Committee to include exploration of potential mass transportation opportunities that can be exploited or expanded for our members under the provisions of Appendix A-44 (i.e. program now referred to as NYS-Ride). More to come in the future as UUP continues to follow up on this important issue. ■

ANONYMOUS FEEDBACK — From "Business Life" Column by Lucy Kellaway, *The Financial Times*, 9/4/08 —Reprinted at the request of Henry Steck

READER'S QUESTION: "I am a university academic in my 50's. Each year, written student comments are submitted to all lecturers. All are anonymous and inevitably some are good, some are bad. This year, despite excellent feedback on most courses, one group has written personal and distressing remarks that have left me wondering if I am in the right job. There is no "right of reply" and no way of discussing with the students or finding out which ones are so unhappy. What should I do?" — Lecturer, male, 50's

KELLAWAY'S RESPONSE: Unless you want to make a fool of yourself, there is only one thing you can do: nothing. To hunt down your detractors would be hideously embarrassing and would only confirm their dim view of you. Instead you should try to rub the hurtful remarks from your mind, and stop the pointless agonizing over whether you are in the right job. I imagine it is hard enough to keep up morale as a 50-something lecturer—what with the poor pay and the jostling of younger colleagues — without the nasty jibes from students.

Console yourself with the thought that the whole business of teachers being appraised by students is absurd. It is you who is paid to be teaching them and writing reports on them, not vice versa.

In a company there may be some sense in getting underlings to pass judgment on superiors, although most such schemes are badly designed. But to allow students to say what they like anonymously about their teachers strikes me as democracy gone bad.

When I was a student we used to whip each other up into disliking various teachers for mostly stupid reasons. We used to show our dislike of one poor physics teacher by putting crocodile clips on the back of her skirt while she was writing on the board. What your students are doing sounds like a legitimized version of that: you should do what this hapless physics teacher did and simply rise above it.

That doesn't mean you should ignore all feedback; you should rely on better ways of measuring your worth. Do your students get good marks? Do they appear to be learning anything? Do they listen to your lectures? How many bother to turn up? These are the things that matter. Whether or not they like you is quite beside the point.

JO SCHAFFER: VOICE OF A UNION

—Karla Alwes, English

Jo Schaffer, then-President of the SUNY Cortland chapter of UUP, wrote in February of 1992: “What the state has done to [us] is matched only by what [we] haven’t done to protect [our] own interests.” We, her labor union constituents, were being admonished because of our lack of action against the state’s “invasion of longstanding benefits,” as Schaffer called it. And she called it right. Since then, she has gone on to admonish us (when we need it), as UUP Chapter Past-President, Vice President for Professionals, and, finally, as the **UUP Outstanding Retiree for 2008**, for which we offer this honorarium in words.

Schaffer retired in 1996 from the SUNY Cortland Art and Art History Department, where she served as curator of visual resources for 23 years. It was during those years that she worked in all disciplines, locating and supplying photographic images for instructors of classes from every area of campus. Since then she has not been absent from the campus and city activities, as the much-deserving award indicates. Schaffer continues to be a force in every issue and decision that affect the union, especially its 3,300 retiree members. Between 1987 and 1997 she served for eight of those years as

UUP statewide Membership Development Officer, was an elected representative for the Committee on Active Retired Membership (COARM) from 1999-2007, and is now a presidential appointee to COARM. Schaffer speaks out against the government’s attempts to privatize Social Security and Medicare on a statewide level. Here at Cortland she works with the local organization CAPE (Citizens for Aquifer Protection and Employment) to fight against the destruction of our city and county and state.

UUP’s Women’s Rights and Concerns Committee owes much of its origin to the efforts of Schaffer, and she is also credited with helping to initiate and create the SUNY Cortland Children’s Center, which has been a place of immense joy for the children of the College and the community as well as for their families. The Anderson/Rose Poetry Table and Associates would be at a loss without her presence, and the AFT Women’s Rights Committee spoke to the power of Schaffer’s work for all members of labor by honoring her in July for **50 years of continuous union service**. That continuous union service is punctuated and emphasized by her presiding as the first (and only) woman President of the Cortland Chapter (for three terms), as well as the only Professional to ever serve in that role.

On the installation of SUNY Cortland President Judson Taylor, Schaffer spoke as representative of UUP, and as devotee of Oscar Wilde, when she turned to the SUNY Chancellor, who was a member of the audience, and said “I hope you know not just the cost of everything and the value of nothing.” The audience showed their approbation, and their own recognition of the value of that statement, in waves of applause.

At a recent Veterans’ Day commemoration on the Cortland campus, Schaffer quoted General Omar Bradley in her own statement against war: “We know more about war than we know about peace.” This and all the other very active statements made by Schaffer throughout her career are the spirit and the sense of honor embodied in the **Outstanding Retiree of 2008** (and beyond).

In 1996 Schaffer received UUP’s Nina Mitchell Award for distinguished service. But it was in 1991, in the pages of the chapter newsletter, that we saw more precisely who Jo Schaffer is, as she wrote the words by which she continues to live her life: “I’d rather be in the driver’s seat, either on the hook and ladder or the pumper, than be the little spotted dog behind the truck running like mad just to keep up.”

To all little spotted dogs out there: Watch out.
To Jo Schaffer: We look forward to the next 50 years of your efforts at putting out fires for us. ■



...leading a campus “SAVE SUNY” rally, early 1990’s



...organizing “Support SUNY” efforts in downtown Cortland, 1995



...speaking out on Women’s Issues at the Delegate Assembly, late 1990’s



...protesting SUNY budget cuts on the steps of the State Capitol in 2006 with other Cortland UUP members (left to right: Jamie Dangler, Dianne Galutz, Jo Schaffer, Flossy Brush)

—Photos from Chapter Archives

as long as I
have the
breath to
blow
out...candles
on my cake,
I will have
the breath
to fight for
the
continua-
tion of our
benefits

From the Far Side:



TOWARD A SECURE RETIREMENT

—Jo Schaffer
Art and Art History Emerita

I'm happy to say that Social Security and I are the same age. In many ways, Social Security has aged better than I have. Over the years it has firmly supported seniors with a constant and secure financial base after age 62 or 65; it has supported minors in need within families with loss and those with disabilities. Social Security has lived up to its mandate to provide some modicum of financial support and security allowing its beneficiaries dignity during their time of need, retirement and perhaps stress.

Social security has weathered incredible and increasing vicious attacks on its main purposes: there are those among us who feel strongly that if you can't make it by the time you retire, it is not the government's responsibility to allow you the dignity of a secure retirement after a life time of work either in the salaried workplace or in the home. There are those among them who feel that Social Security would be better served if it were privatized through investments in the marketplace or even replaced with just your savings accounts. There are those who would rather see higher and higher profits in their stocks than guarantee a share in the munificence of the workers' dream of a secure retirement.

So having reached our joint birthdays, I have to remind myself that when I started out here at SUNY

Cortland I rarely thought twice about the issues of Social Security and how it would play out. I saw my relatively small deductions for Social Security at the bottom of the check stub and noted the contributions to my retirement plan as inconveniences to my take-home pay. I was delighted when I could finally contribute to an IRA account in addition. So now, when I am at the receiving end, let me tell you how comforting it is to get that Social Security check deposited monthly.

The market is a fickle provider...it goes up, it goes down...and then it goes down again. Social Security is the stable base that you can count on. It may not cover all but it is warming to know it is there. I have never really understood why there is a cut-off for contributions to Social Security. From what I have read, the system could remain healthy for decades if contributions were made on the total of every salary or income. Why shouldn't the high-income person continue to contribute? After all, they do, in the end, get a higher percentage back. Social Security could be made healthy with that simple change in the law.

We are downright fortunate to be covered by that 70-year-old-plus Social Security system, by our retirement plans and the health care benefits so carefully negotiated by UUP. Every year, we have had to fight (with the help of UUP) with New York state to maintain the coverage earned through our "active working" years. Hey, as long as I have the breath to blow out Social Security candles as well as the ones on my cake, I will have the breath to fight for the continuation of our benefits. ■



SAFEGUARD SOCIAL SECURITY OR PRIVATIZE IT?

—Reprinted from *CWA News*,
v. 68, no. 5, August-September 2008, p. 4

John McCain is reviving the Bush administration's proposal for at least partially privatizing Social Security, and has been criticizing the way the system has worked for 70 years. At a town hall meeting in Denver in July, McCain declared, "Americans have got to understand that we are paying present-day retirees with the taxes paid by young workers in America today. That's a disgrace. It's an absolute disgrace and it's got to be fixed."

Barack Obama is strongly opposed to privatization as well as McCain's suggestion to raise the eligibility level to 68. "If we privatize Social Security, what will we tell retirees whose investments in the stock market went badly? We're sorry? Keep working? You're on your own?" Obama said.

Instead, to keep the system solvent for the long-term, Obama is proposing raising the Social Security payroll tax for people who earn more than \$250,000 a year. Citizens for Tax Justice says this would affect only 1 percent of the population. Currently, no one pays Social Security taxes on income above \$102,000.

On other retirement issues, Obama supports bankruptcy reform to help safeguard pensions, offering matching fund incentives to help low- and middle-income workers save for retirement, and eliminating income taxes for seniors making less than \$50,000 a year.

STECK OPEN LETTER (continued from page 3)

Workers in the public sector have a unionized rate that is nearly five times that of workers in the private sector (although the rates differ markedly by region and state). Interestingly, education, training and library workers had the highest unionization rate among all occupations — 37.2%. And before your eyes glaze over, I'll add that in 2007 union members had a median weekly earning rate of \$863 compared to non-unionized workers with a rate of \$663 — or somewhat over \$10,000 per year.

What has this to do with SUNY and with SUNY Cortland? Very simple: academic workers need unions as much as blue collar, pink collar and white collar workers. Behind the walls of Ivy the words “intellectual” and “professor” and “staff” and “unionist” now come together with some frequency. Particularly in public universities, where most students are educated, faculty and staff are found carrying a union card along with their class notes and research files—as well as financial aid officers, dorm assistants, counselors, lab technicians and all the other professionals that make up the modern university. In New York State, the faculties of two of America's largest public universities — the State University of New York and the City University of New York—are represented by active unions: the largest are United University Professions (UUP) in SUNY and the Professional Staff Congress (PSC) in CUNY.

My first words to new colleagues — whether academics or professionals — is welcome to SUNY Cortland and to United University Professions. UUP represents more than 34,000 academic and professional faculty holding over 500 SUNY job titles and working on 29 SUNY campuses, plus System Administration, Empire State College, and the New York State Theater Institute. UUP is affiliated with New York State United Teachers (NYSUT) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), the National Education Association (NEA), and the AFL-CIO.

It's been that way for nearly thirty years, ever since New York granted public employees the right to organize and bargain collectively. At Cortland UUP represents about 90% of the faculty and staff.

As academic and professional faculty, we are often asked, by members of the public and by colleagues, why professors need a union. After all, a labor union is an instrument of “collective” action, but professors and academic workers are judged and rewarded by virtue of their “individual” perform-

ance as teachers, researchers, counselors, financial aid advisers, dorm residents, librarians, and so forth. Moreover, academic work is not standardized. Our collars may be blue but they are button-down from J. Crew and Lands' End and maybe even Brooks Brothers. Why, then, a union?

The answer is simple. Although our work is individualized, we share a common set of interests as professionals, as state employees, as members of the university community, and as citizens. Our individual work and talent is intimately connected with our shared common circumstances. Without a collective agent, each faculty member would have to bargain individually with his or her employer, the State of New York, and to deal individually with the administrators who manage the modern university and who, as often as not, lack real ties to individual campus communities. It doesn't take a Ph.D. in political science or even physics to appreciate how a lonely professor of English would do against the Governor and his hired guns on the Board of Trustees or against a Provost or College President pressed hard by budget cuts and driven increasingly by market considerations. And this is all the more the case of non-tenure track adjuncts and part-timers who make up roughly 50%-plus of the Cortland faculty and even more elsewhere around the country.

The case has two elements. On the one hand, faculty and staff would be tossed over the side by the State if there were no unions (whether UUP, CSEA or PEF) to negotiate salaries and terms and conditions of employment. Currently, for example, we are due a 3% pay raise — and that is the case throughout the state workforce. I am sure that Gov. Paterson would just love to not have to meet that fiscal commitment just now — if ever. And in this respect, the union's political advocacy is crucial. During the dark Pataki years, the ultra-conservative Board of Trustees would have hammered SUNY even worse than it did — with threats of campus closings, with imposition of curricular decisions, with savage budget cuts and with relentless SUNY-bashing in the press.

On the other hand, even at Cortland, with its post-1980 history of a generally collegial relationship with the campus administration (despite very rough periods of lay-offs and other unpleasant administrative actions and despite the occasional ugly administrator), individuals need support and protection. In the past, we have saved the jobs of colleagues, protected colleagues against harsh and sometimes vindictive administrative actions, blunted or defeated unwise administrative decisions, and corrected numerous bureaucratic errors that hurt our members. (continued on next page)

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individually**

STECK OPEN LETTER (continued from page 9)

All of these instances usually began with an administrator insisting that he or she is correct and UUP wrong. Without a UUP check and balance, many of our colleagues would have lost money, lost benefits, or suffered wrong-headed policies.

Do we always “win”? Do we always resolve issues in the best possible way for our members? Are our members always delighted and pleased with our results? Unhappily, no. Management – whether the State, SUNY System Administration or local top administrators (or even mid-level Management/Confidential administrators)— holds more power and authority than we would wish. In the past, certainly, we have had to endure what the British might call bloody-minded administrators who were open to neither reason nor decency. Believe me, without a collective voice, SUNY and SUNY Cortland would be in even worse shape than they are.

Without a collective voice, faculty interests would not be heard in the halls of the legislature, the executive offices, and in the public. Without a collective voice, SUNY bureaucrats and Trustee ideologues would be dominant. And without a collective voice, who could resist, in the current climate, the attacks on the university and our profession. Just consider those elements of our profession that are under attack: academic standards, tenure, the right to due process, the right to a reasonable workload, decent salary and benefits, reasonable library and labs for our work and our teaching, job security, maintenance of the traditional prerogatives of faculty, and above all — as we learned during the Pataki years — academic freedom.

The old adage — in numbers and in solidarity there is strength—sums it up. The vulnerability of individual faculty members to exploitation and stress, even with the most benign managers, is too obvious to expand upon. Even at Cortland, we have had in the past individuals treated with a lack of collegiality, decency, professionalism, and civility. Contract provisions are sometimes applied indifferently and not in a timely manner. For years, to take one example, SUNY and the state fought tenaciously to avoid giving part-timers health benefits or retirement benefits or even the very modest contract protections they now have. Without UUP, numerous colleagues would not have an advocate to help them in dealing with problems with supervisors or misguided administrators. And there is a lot more ground to gain for faculty and professionals, for full-timers and part-timers, and for particularly professional groups within the faculty.

Our work, it seems, is never over. We can take the measure of our enemies — enemies not simply of UUP but of the soul and mission of this great university — by their effort last year to strip us of optical and dental benefits in order to force us to capitulate at the bargaining table. Currently, we are still fighting efforts by the Trustees to fragment, privatize, dismantle the university and to cut back on its mission. Does anyone really believe that an individual faculty member or even an individual campus president can single-handedly resist this onslaught?

Without the check and balance of a union — imperfect as it may be — matters would be worse. At campuses other than Cortland the situation is, in fact, already worse. The mechanisms a union brings to contract development, grievance procedure and the complexities of labor law provide services that previous academic organizations did not possess and that Faculty Senates do not — or cannot — possess.

Like any other union, academic unions like UUP negotiate the contracts that govern the terms and conditions of employment of the faculty. They seek just compensation for a notoriously underpaid profession; they seek better working conditions and job security; they fight for health and other benefits; they protect faculty members from illegal actions by university managers and pursue grievances on behalf of their members; they seek to improve the working life of the most vulnerable members of the academic profession — the large number of low-paid, over-worked part-timers who still lack full benefits and job security; they fight pre-judice and discrimination.

On our own campus, UUP has been an active and energetic presence. It maintains this newsletter as a primary forum for the interchange of views and ideas. It works with the College Administration in presenting the College to the public and to public officials. It plays a watchdog role — not always a popular role — in protecting the safety and health of students and staff. It provides informal job counseling, intercession between employee and supervisor, and liaison between members of the administration and the faculty on a case-by-case basis which eases the operation of the college. Every faculty member knows that UUP is available to intercede in matters of personal and professional concern in a confidential manner. We take up and struggle hard for the least strong among us: contingent (i.e., part-time, adjuncts, non-tenure eligible) faculty; for colleagues needing time away to care for a new born, a sick family member, an elder; a colleague pressured to work beyond the performance program; violations of rules in terms of personnel procedures.

I’m proud of what UUP does and troubled when we fail to win. Sometimes, we hit the target; sometimes, we miss. UUP is always there to help — seven days a week, four weeks a month, twelve months a year. Join us. ■

NOT SURE IF YOU ARE MEMBER OF UUP YET?



All SUNY academics and professionals (except for casual employees) are represented by UUP even if they don't actually join the union. New employees sometimes find this confusing

when they see that a “UUP agency fee” is listed as an after-tax deduction on their paychecks. But, if your paycheck says “UUP Agency Fee,” you are not actually a union member. To become a union member, you must sign and return a membership form, after which your paycheck will say “UUP Member.” For more information or to check your membership status, contact Boodie McGinnis in the chapter office, uup@kortland.edu or campus ext. 5991. It doesn't cost more to join!

**UUP ON PARADE AT THE STATE FAIR
LABOR DAY 2008**

Once again, an enthusiastic group of Cortland UUP members and their families joined colleagues from Upstate Medical University and other regional labor unions at the New York State Fair Annual Labor Day Parade. Special thanks to Brian Tappan, Upstate Medical University, for sharing these photos.



Joe Westbrook, Facilities Planning, Design & Construction



Thai Grad students Punika Priputtakan and Caninan Preuekpranool, guests of Cynthia Benton, carrying the chapter banner



David Ritchie, Library



Cynthia Benton, Childhood/Early Childhood



Mel King, Psychology (right), and family members (l-r) Andrew King, Julia King (stroller), Debbie Clark, and Lisa King



Ibipo Johnston-Anumonwo, Geography



Members of Upstate Medical University and Cortland chapter delegations pose for a group shot following the parade. A fun day for all!

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