

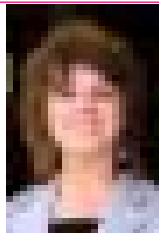


November 2006

WCCFT Union NEWS

Monthly Newsletter of The Westchester Community College Federation of Teachers

President's Message



Politics: A Twelve Month Responsibility

November is the most political month of the year. It is a time when no one has enough applause for teachers and education, when all incumbents miraculously find unencumbered resources for long standing school needs and all challengers loudly assert that the system needs fundamental change which, of course, they alone can initiate. Labor unions endorse politicians who while in office have voted for a "labor" program (or who at least have not actively obstructed pro-labor legislation) or, occasionally, back outside candidates who promise to vote for labor issues if elected. It has always been a mystery to me when looking over the positive voting records of our representatives in the State Legislature why we are in such bad shape if they are voting 100% in favor of legislation we support. Maybe we are not putting forward the right bills. Maybe we need new strategies and allies.

Politics is an understanding of power relations and advocacy for a distribution of resources to benefit a community. Political strategy is seeing the whole picture and finding ways of putting all the parts together in ways that improve the situation of the community.

It becomes obvious every November that we have a responsibility to be political all year long and on many levels of governing from the College campus to the State Capitol and even beyond. Our sponsoring legislators at the Westchester County Board of Legislators have expressed an interest in a town meeting on higher education. Our State representatives have also shown a willingness to get together to discuss our agenda.

And we do have a number of vital issues over which politicians have a large measure of control:

* **Funding** at the local and state level is still not adequate for our needs, leaving our students—the least fiscally solid source of all obligated sources (County, State and Student) — to carry the burden of their education. Westchester Community College has gone from the cheapest to the most expensive community college in the state of New York, actually requiring special permission from SUNY to charge the tuition increases the Board of Trustees

power across a wide spectrum from Administrators to faculty and students is a subject of legislation in some states. California, for example, has required faculty and student representation on committees making important choices about the allocation of money and the selection of personnel.

Let's take this time to look over the candidates running for office carefully before we make choices. Are they taking our issues seriously throughout their tenure? Are they undertaking the kind of fundamental changes necessary to reduce the bur-



recommended (and is it true that yet another hike in payment is being discussed?)

* **Adjunct Faculty** continue to serve as the means by which higher education operates on limited funds. As the ratio of full-time to part-time edges towards one-fourth to three-fourths, we are without any legal constraints which could begin to restore a balance between full-timers with benefits and a commitment to a single institution and part-timers who are marginalized from the educational communities they so loyally serve.

* **Shared Governance** which mandates the inclusion of faculty in the decision-making process and defuses

den on our students and meet the needs of adjunct faculty? Are they interested in discussing the concept of shared governance?

And, most importantly, let's work out our own program carefully, looking at the big picture from local to international demands on resources, and come up with an agenda we can vigorously advance. Then we can plan our own strategies, enlist allies and form coalitions when necessary and move forward to effect positive change for Westchester Community College and higher education.



Union NEWS

A Monthly Newsletter of
Local 2431 American Federation of Teachers (AFL-CIO)
Affiliated with New York State United Teachers

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Calendar of Events

Monthly Meetings:

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

Dec. 6, 2006:

Union Looks Back on 60 Years of
Academic Professionalism

Feb. 7, 2007:

Contract Strategies

March 7, 2007:

Health & Safety

April 4, 2007:

Election Nominations

May 2, 2007:

Committee Meetings

Meet Diane Urban, Our New Adjunct Faculty Rep

The following is an excerpt from Professor Urban's remarks at the WCCFT meeting on Wednesday, October 6.

I would like to thank you all for this opportunity to serve on the Executive Committee of the Union. Let me tell you a little bit about myself. I have been working at WCC since 1980 and I love it here. By nature, I am a positive person and that helps me focus on the benefits of being an adjunct. This status has provided me with an opportunity to diversify my talents.

As a NYS licensed Psychologist, I maintain a small private practice. In addition, I host parenting parties devoted to helping people re-discover the joys of parenting. For two years, I hosted a cable TV show called "Parenting Matters." Besides working here, I also teach at Manhattan College. In the past, I have also taught at Manhattanville, Purchase, Dominican, and Marymount Colleges.

When I was considering what I wanted to say to all of you today, two recent events came to my mind. One was the fact that my daughter is on the high school debate team and her issue to research this week was, "Are Unions Obsolete?" That certainly made me think about what the Union had done for me as well as what work still needs to be done. The other event occurred during a class discussion on stereotyping. A student said, "I know you're rich!" His evidence was that full-time professors earn over \$100,000 per year, work only 15 hours per week and only 30 weeks per year. The "only" was the key. As full-timers, you face the stereotype of too much money for too little work; no one sees the hours of prep time, committee work

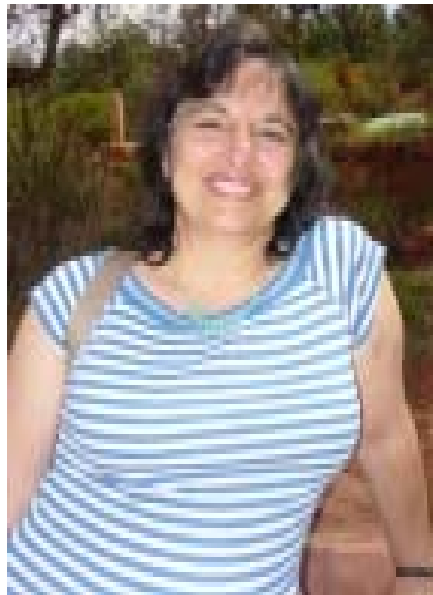
or research. As part-timers, we face the opposite end of that stereotype. People ask our hourly rate, then consider our commuting time, prep time, time spent grading papers and completing attendance rosters and ask why we do it. "What do you make? Twelve cents an hour?"

The fact that we are on opposite ends of the same continuum points to the larger issue. The commonality is that we all do it for the same reason. We all teach because we care about our students. We care about their futures.

There are, however, some challenges that may be more specific to adjuncts. I am not going to complain; I am only going to present situations that I think

have solutions if we all work together. Many of them are not about money. Here are my suggestions:

1. Final exam assignments that match our work hours (not an "if it can be done," but a respect that acknowledges that we have other commitments that enable us to make a living). The option to proctor our class if it did not match our teaching schedule would be ours.
2. Have names of senior adjuncts listed in SOI.
3. Ability to pick our



- own textbooks.
4. Voice mail on campus.
5. Ability to access campus e-mail off-campus.
6. Access to campus newsletter that tells of happenings among staff and faculty; makes one feel connected.
7. More office space...students sometimes want/need to speak to us.
8. More classes offered that meet once or twice a week (this increases hourly wage by reducing commuting time, gas mileage, and wear and tear on car).

“The Hidden Face of Globalization: A Video Review”

By Richard Courage

It is shortsighted for a union not to care about what is happening to workers in the rest of the world. With outsourcing, it is clear that underpaid labor abroad not only violates human rights, but undermines decent paid labor at home.

A middle aged American stands beneath an umbrella in the streets of Dhaka, Bangladesh. Behind him is a nondescript two-story building with its windows lit up. He speaks to the camera:

“It’s 3:25 in the morning in Dhaka. It’s raining, obviously. Behind us workers are still working — garment workers. They’re going into their twentieth hour of work. We’ve seen this in a drive around Dhaka. We’ve seen this in maybe a dozen factories tonight. These workers will work till five or six in the morning. Maybe they’ll get an hour or two of sleep, and then they’ll start another shift, which will be fifteen or sixteen or even twenty hours. It’s hard to imagine that it’s August in the United States, and people are on vacation. It’s August in Bangladesh, and these workers are working twenty hours a day making our clothing.”

Production values in this 34-minute documentary are unremarkable. The man, Charlie Kernaghan of the National Labor Committee, is not eloquent of speech or polished in manner, but he has a clear mission and pursues it relentlessly. “The Hidden Face of Globalization” documents the working conditions and lives of people in Bangladesh and elsewhere, who work for local firms that supply the garments sold by Wal-Mart, Disney, and other giant American companies.

Members of the WCCFT executive board heard Kernaghan’s keynote address at the Fall 2005 community college conference of New York State United Teachers. His speech was effective, the film more so. It gives a face to human misery that is not an accidental byproduct of time, place or ill fortune but of deliberate corporate policy.

The camera takes us into one of the factories of which Kernaghan spoke. First, we see close-ups of faces. They are overwhelmingly female. Some are pretty. Some are plain. But all are poor, and all are young. An unseen female narrator explains:

“All across the developing world, the workers who make our products are



Typical living quarters for a garment worker’s family.

young people. 80% of them are women 16 to 25 years old, who are locked in factories and forced to work under harsh sweatshop conditions. There are 1.8 million garment workers in Bangladesh in 3600 factories, sewing over 900 million garments a year for export to the US. All the giant US retailers produce there.”

I stop the VCR to do some research of my own. Examining the clothes I’m wearing, I discover my Eddie Bauer jeans were “Made in Mexico,” my Joe Boxer shorts in El Salvador, and my tee shirt in Sri Lanka. In the closet, I examine other labels: Mauritius, Honduras, China, Pakistan, Thailand, Taiwan. My favorite Geoffrey Beene shirt was, indeed, “Made in Bangladesh,” perhaps even by the women in the video. What are their lives like?

“Each day the workers walk to work, at least an hour round trip, because they cannot afford to take a bicycle rickshaw. Each morning there are tens of thousands of women streaming down the streets on their way to work, and then again at night, in the pitch darkness, when they are let out.” The camera captures their retreating figures, walking the dark, wet streets in rubber flipflops or

barefoot.

The camera returns to the factory. “The standard shift is from 8 am to 11 pm, fifteen hours a day, seven days a week. All overtime is mandatory. On average, the workers receive just two days off per month. When there’s a rush to complete orders before they are shipped to the US, there are grueling forced all-night shifts. At the end of the shift, the workers curl up on the floor next to their sewing machines and sleep for three or four hours. The workers can be in the factory up to 107 hours a week. The women are exhausted and sick. Their families are collapsing. Their children are left alone since they are never home.” They earn eight to seventeen cents an hour. Even in a country as poor as Bangladesh, these are starvation wages.

“No one worker sews an entire garment.” And we see the rows of girls, and a few boys, hunched over sewing machines. One stitches an inseam. Another sews in a zipper. One folds and presses cuffs. On the floor, a child of perhaps fourteen cuts out pockets. Over and over, hundreds, thousands of times a day, day in and day out. We see male supervisors and uniformed guards

What's the real state of the college?

By Richard Rosell

Every organization has its traditions and rituals. The Supreme Court, for example, holds its first session following the summer recess on the first Monday in October. We at Westchester Community College reserve the second Wednesday in October to hear the president deliver what is always billed as the "State of the College Message." At each of these gatherings the president welcomes the faculty back to the campus after a restful and productive summer and proudly announces that this is his 34th, 35th, 36th.....such message.

I attended Dr. Hankin's "inaugural address" on September 7, 1971. That first talk, one hundred and eight minutes long (shortened, we were told, from a longer hour and twenty minutes), was delivered by a 31 year old *wunderkind* (at 26 years of age Dr. Hankin was president of a community college in Maryland, and claims to have been the youngest community college president in the U.S.) who *wowed* the presidential search committee with his wide ranging knowledge of our college and community colleges in general. That address was Dr. Hankin's first contact with the faculty and without doubt it was intended to *wow* us as well. The young president not only sought to demonstrate his grasp of the *philosophy* and *theory* underlying the community college movement, but with his references to Greek mythology, literature, and quotes from historical figures, was intent on demonstrating his academic credentials as well. Also memorable was the very lengthy list of administrative and programmatic changes he planned to implement.

Recent State of the College Messages have had a decidedly different tone and purpose than that first one. Rather than being statements of philosophy, theory or the outlines of a master plan for the college, these later messages have been lighter and more entertaining. These talks are filled with jokes and stories and an abundance of statistical facts and figures, which we are told, an administrator must have at his command if he is to make effective decisions. A common reprise is a section on personal reflections. One year he listed the things that are common today that did not ex-

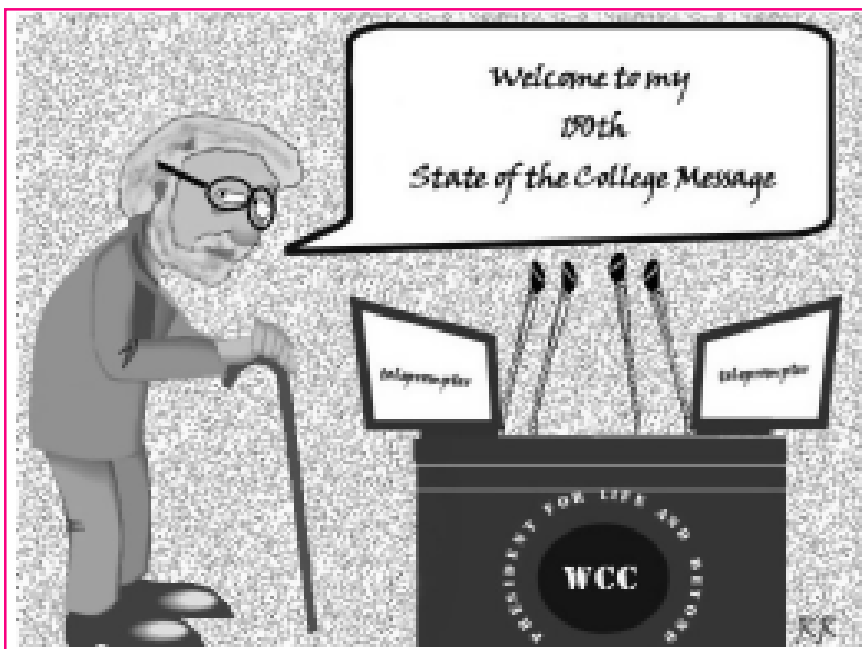
ist in 1940, the year he was born: computers, microwaves ovens, cell phones, jet planes, washing machines, disposable diapers, birth control pills, atomic bombs, etc, etc, etc. Another frequent theme is his travel: visits to his children and grandchildren around the country; comments on the discomfort of airplane travel, hotel mini-bars, and even the cleanliness (or lack thereof) of service station restrooms. He generally makes some reference to political issues, while being scrupulous about remaining non-partisan, of course. While the jokes and stories are for the entertainment of his audience, it is obvious that he enjoys them as well. Last year, after laughing heartily at one of his own stories, the president stated that now we all can understand why he 'enjoys preparing these talks.' On a number of occasions he referred to a trustee who attends the talks primarily because he enjoys the jokes. The jokes, stories and statistical trivia are weakly linked to the four or five standard issues he raises every year: students, faculty, budget, organization personnel, etc. Also included are a number of flattering statements about the faculty, sometimes in the form of letters or recorded statements from students who describe how their lives changed as result of the influence and dedication of their teachers

at Westchester Community College.

Although I am always impressed with the effort the president must expend to find all these jokes and stories, as well as his ability to deliver them, after hearing these talks I often wonder what he really wished to accomplish in this important hour with the faculty. For aside from warning us that enrollments are down again, or that the state or the county are not providing their fair share of funding, I rarely feel that the president addresses the more pressing issues we face. Let me share some examples:

For the past four or five years the college has been involved in a state mandated student assessment. Last year (2005) Dr. Hankin told us that it "behooves us to take the initiative" in this area and "that under the leadership of Francis Dearing we will continue to do so." Yet, despite the importance of this issue, the president made no effort to describe the initiative *he* has in mind. He told us nothing about his charge to Francis Dearing or exactly what her mission is. Is she alone going to create policy in this area? What problems or concerns does he foresee assessment generating for us in the future? I would have hoped that at very least the presi-

(See "State of the College" Pg. 4)



State of the college

(Continued from Pg. 3)

dent would have provided some insight into how our students have performed in the assessment process to date. For me at least, that would have said something about the real state of the college.

Another issue is the number of adjunct instructors employed by the college. Last year the president informed us that the college employs over 800 adjuncts. He went on to say that “By everyone’s admission this is too much in comparison to the number of full-time faculty members. But,” he continued, “it does not seem as if we are going to receive more funding for full-time faculty.” He went on to applaud the WCCFT for pressing the County Board of Legislators to insert two new full-time lines into the college budget in each of the next ten years, for a total of 20 new lines. Having made those points, the president went on to discuss other issues. Unfortunately, these remarks raised more questions than they answered. For example, if the union was successful in convincing the Board of Legislators to insert two new lines a year into our budget, why has he not been successful in achieving similar increases? Does the union really have more clout in this area than he does? Has he actually filled the new positions inserted by the Board of Legislators or do they remain unfilled? What are the obstacles to funding more full-time lines? Who objects to establishing them? What are their objections? How does Plan C, which was achieved with the help of the WCCFT, affect the college’s ability to allocate funds for full-time faculty positions? How does he explain the reduction in full-time

faculty lines over the past 20+ years (according to my recollection there were approximately 180 full-time teaching lines in the late 1970’s, while today there are many fewer). In the time that faculty positions have decreased, have the number of administrative and staff positions increased or decreased? We require a more complete picture if we are really going to understand what is going on here.

The president’s statement makes it clear that he expects that the college will continue to employ large

numbers of adjuncts for the foreseeable future. If that is so, it raises a number of additional questions: Why does he believe the imbalance between the number full-timers and adjuncts *is a problem*? What does he think institutions of higher education should do to address this growing imbalance? Can we gradually address this imbalance by gradually increasing the salary and benefits we provide to adjuncts? Is he willing to join forces with the union to promote increased benefits, such as health insurance or accumulation of sick days

for adjuncts? If we cannot provide adjuncts with all the benefits of full-time positions, should we at least consider ways of providing them with greater job protections and due process? In short, if we are unable to create more full-time lines, why not establish a long term plan to create more equitable conditions for adjuncts?

It is my belief that president can do much more to make the State of the College Message a time of introspection, where we all take a hard, in-depth look at our problems in an effort to generate healthy debate. In his 1971 address the president acknowledged the role of open, forthright discussion with the following quote from John Gardner: “Where human institutions are concerned, love without criticism brings stagnation and criticism without love brings destruction. Better all sorts of criticism than no criticism at all. The moving waters are full of life and health, only in the still waters is there stagnation and death.” He added: “I think we must remember, all of us, that opposing points of view are to be sought out rather than suppressed”. I, for one, would welcome a state of the college message which moved us closer to that goal. What are your thoughts?

“Although I am always impressed with the effort the president must expend to find all these jokes and stories, as well as his ability to relate them, after hearing these talks I often wonder what he really wished to accomplish in this important hour with the faculty.”

Hidden Face

(Continued from Pg. 2)

patrolling the aisles. The narrator tells us that workers are cursed, shouted out, slapped or punched for being too slow or for making the slightest mistake. By their late twenties, they are used up, unable to maintain the relentless pace, and are fired.

The narrator does not explain how the film crew gained access to this factory, but Kernaghan explained at the

NYSUT conference. Posing as representatives of a fictitious American retail firm, he and his associates were welcome to see how garments are made so cheaply – a small deception in service of a larger truth.

As a young man, I experienced firsthand the mind-numbing dreariness of assembly-line work. But I worked in union shops and could count on certain basic rights: two days off each week, a paycheck that approached a living wage, limits on overtime hours and time

and a half pay for them, freedom from arbitrary abuse by supervisors. And I worked alongside other adults, not children who belonged in school. “The Hidden Face of Globalization” shows us what workers’ lives are like when corporate power is untrammelled by collective bargaining agreements or government regulation. It’s not a pretty picture.

This video is available in the WCCFT office. Further information is available at www.nlcnet.org.

Relive 60 Great Years of WCCFT History!

*Don't miss our gala 60th
anniversary celebration
at the December meeting!*

*We are inviting all Union
members past & present to
share historical moments
and experiences*

- *Wednesday*
- * December 6th*
- * 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.*
- * SCI 102*