



WCCFT *Union* NEWS

March 2007

Monthly Newsletter of The Westchester Community College Federation of Teachers

Time for a New Promotional System: Part I

By Richard Rosell



I cannot recall anyone on the campus ever speaking positively about the promotional process. Can you?

It is easy to understand how an individual who is finally promoted to the rank of Full-Professor feels liberated, as if a weight has been lifted or a long struggle finally come to an end; or the disappointment felt by those who are rebuffed, again and again, by a system which does not provide a transparent or predictable course for success. One might also argue that this anguish is heightened when one sees recent hires, even untenured faculty, being encouraged to compete as early as possible, spurred on by the same slogans that are used to prompt people to play the lottery: "you can't win it if you are not in it," or "why not apply, you have nothing to lose?" It is apparent that dedication alone is no guarantee of success when it comes to being promoted on our campus. After enduring the pressures of the promotional system, it is not difficult to understand why some would consider withdrawing from it or be tempted to avoid it completely.

Although financially rewarding, a promotion on our campus is not accompanied by the honor or institutional recognition it should provide. Aside from a letter from the president informing the candidate of a change in status or mention in the Dean's annual letter to the faculty, there is little acknowledgement of an individual's years of service or contributions to the college.

Although the system was established soon after the first contract was approved in 1969, its impact has never been systematically assessed or reviewed. Over the years, efforts have been made through collective bargain-

ing and the grievance procedure to weed out injustices in the system, but one key sentence in the contract has stood in the way of any meaningful change. That sentence reads: "In making such decisions the *President shall consider the recommendations of the*

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faculty, (as provided in 3.10 below) but shall be charged *with the sole responsibility* for any such decision.” (Italics added.) What that sentence means is, even if the Central Committee unanimously ranks a faculty member *Number One* year after year, the president is not obligated to follow its recommen-

dations; he can act as a committee of one in promoting anyone he wishes. Unfortunately, the president has shown no willingness to accept any limitations to his power nor has he been responsive to our concerns about the lack of transparency of the process.

The significance of the contractual language was brought home to me many years ago, when during a Step II grievance hearing over a promotional decision, I was shocked when I heard President Hankin shamelessly tell the grievant: "As long as I am president of this college, you will never be promoted." Unfortunately, based on the contractual language quoted above, an arbitrator ruled that the president was within his right not to promote the individual. Although the faculty member had been ranked number one by the CC on several occasions, he was never promoted and remained an assistant professor until he retired many years later. The president did not say *why* he would *never* promote the individual. Yet, when you consider his use of the word *never*, it is hard not to conclude that there was some personal, rather than professional, issue that was the basis for his decision.

The finality of the president's statement and his refusal to promote a candidate repeatedly given a high ranking by the Central Committee, suggests that the president's promotional decisions are not necessarily based on objective criteria or the value of the individual's contributions to the college. Rather, the president's words and deeds led me to conclude that he uses the promotional system not only to reward the deserving, but also to punish those who have fallen out of favor. The actions described above suggest to me that President Hankin has not lived up to the promise he made to the faculty in his 1971 inaugural address when he said:

(See "Promotions" on Pg. 8)



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Affiliated with New York State United Teachers

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Phone: (914) 345-8856

Fax: (914) 345-2761

Newsletter printer

Efficiency Printing Co., A Union Shop
126 So. Lexington, White Plains, NY
914-949-8611

Calendar of Events

Monthly Meetings:

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

March 7, 2007:

Health & Safety
"Watchdogs"

March 29 - April 1, 2007

AFT Higher Ed Conference
Portland, OR

April 4, 2007:

Election Nominations
Committee Work

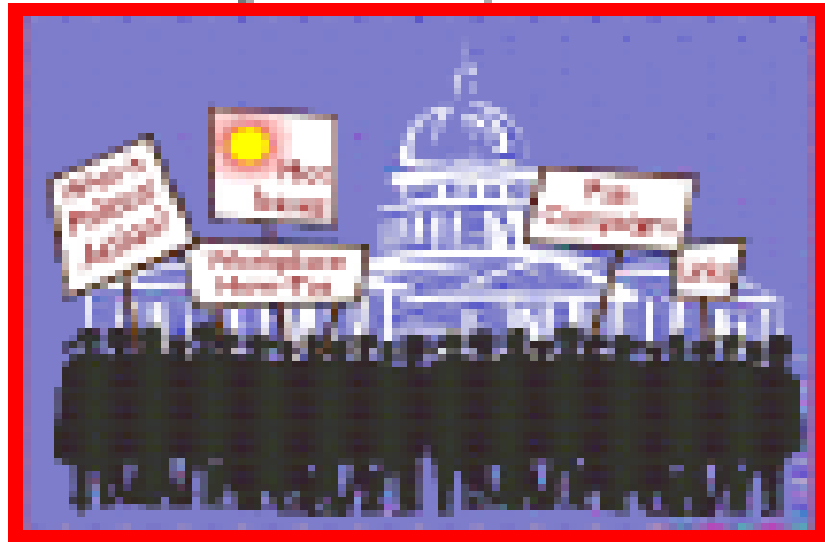
April 26-28, 2007

NYSUT Representative Assembly
Washington, DC

May 2, 2007:

Legislative Luncheon
Westchester County
Board of Legislators

Will We Put the Winds of Change to a Test of Fire?



The fresh new faces arriving in legislatures at all levels of government this year have been heralded as "winds of change," a "better direction for labor" and a chance to put forward a union agenda with hopes of results. That agenda includes reform of existing labor laws to make organizing easier and bargaining more equitable; greater funding for education; attention to the problems of declining full time employees and growing management control of the workplace.

Three recently elected legislators represent districts important to Westchester Community College and the Westchester Community College Federation of Teachers. All of them declared themselves pro-labor. Two were endorsed by the Westchester Putnam Central Labor Body. They are: John Hall, Democrat, who defeated Republican incumbent Sue Kelley to win the seat from the 19th Congressional district. Hall ran on a pro-environment, anti-war platform and in his short time in the 110th Congress has al-

ready co-sponsored a bill to increase the federal minimum wage. And Ken Jenkins, a Yonkers Democrat who beat his Republican rival, Ciceley Greaves-Vega, for the Westchester County Board of Legislators' 16th district seat vacated by Stewart-Cousins. In an endorsement interview at the Westchester Putnam Central Labor Body, he promised Union President Anne D'Orazio that he would be a friend and advocate of the College.

Andrea Stewart-Cousins won a major victory over long-time Senator and third-ranking New York State Republican, Nick Spano, to gain the right to represent the 35th Senate district which includes the College. In her tenure with the Westchester County Board of Legislators, Stewart-Cousins worked with the College and the Union on budgetary measures.

The test begins anew. The issues are before us. We must hold the legislators' political feet to the fire. The Union's Political Action Committee will be closely monitoring the support of all our representatives.



John Hall



Andrea Stewart-Cousins



Ken Jenkins