

LOCAL 1796
At
William Paterson University of New Jersey
General and Executive/Local Council Meeting

Date: Tuesday, March 20, 2007
Location: Valley Road
Time: 12:30 pm – 1:45 pm

Present: S. Tardi, L. Gazzillo Diaz, C. Williams, J. Pinkston, S. Selke, F. Pavese, I. DiMaio, J. Wilkerson, G. Pope, C. Goldstein, M. Peek, S.H. Chung, G. Guerrieri, J. Carter, J. Najarian, S. Wollock, A. Pachtman, P. Jackson, R. Pardi, R. Rehberg, M. Innis-Jimenez, S. Betts, K. Louie, M. Thompson, A. Montare, S. Lawrence, A. Scala, J. Matthew, V. Vicari, J. Hutchison, M. Turkish, L. Xu, S. Nassiripour, K. Makarec, K. Martus, J. Hutchinson, M. Martin, P. Chen, M. Giorgio, M. Watad, T. Finnegan, B. Gionet, K. Kim

Items distributed to the Council and General Membership:

- 1) Proposed Agenda for Meeting
- 2) Minutes of the 2/20/2007 General and Executive/Local Council Meeting
- 3) Sample Calculations for CNJSCL Full Time Unit

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 12:41 pm.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

A motion to approve the agenda was made by M. Goldstein, seconded by P. Jackson. Approved unanimously.

3. Approval of Minutes of the February 20, 2007 General Membership and Executive/Local Council Meeting

A motion to approve the minutes was made by M. Goldstein and seconded by G. Pope. Approved unanimously.

4. Legislative Breakfast (March 21, 2007)

F. Pavese reminded the membership that our Local is hosting a Legislative Breakfast on Wednesday, 3/21 from 8:00 – 10:00 am in Hobart Manor. The legislators who have agreed to attend include Girgenti, Pou, Steele, Weinberg, Huddle, Johnson, and Boardman. Tardi said attendance of seven legislators is significant and reminded the members that the purpose of the event is to highlight the University and to demonstrate that we have a strong Local that encourages oversight. Tardi said the Executive Board is designing a fact sheet that highlights positive things at William Paterson, including the fact that we deal with a large percentage of first generation college students and at-risk students, and the additional time it takes to deal with this population. Tardi said it is important for the legislators to understand what we do and how important funding is to further our growth and development. She encouraged members to highlight our students

and present a unified front. She said we can demonstrate that we care about this university, and while it is good, it can be better with appropriate financial support.

Tardi highlighted a number of issues and legislative bills that are relevant to unionism and higher education, including a bill to add two employee representatives to the Board of Trustees with voting rights except for personnel matters; fair bargaining to prevent the Administration from unilaterally changing the terms of employment after an impasse has been reached in negotiations; the creation of a HOPE Scholarship Program that will waive tuition for all students who maintain a B average; the expansion of tuition aid grants for part-time undergraduate students at the senior public institutions; a subcontracting bill that prohibits subcontracting of unit work in public education/higher education sectors during the term of a collective bargaining agreement; a bill for equity for adjunct and part-time faculty; a bill relating to the Ethics Commission that would exempt faculty members at public institutions of higher education from limitation on payment of travel expenses and honoraria; and a bill requiring the Commission on Higher Education to provide to the Governor and Legislature an annual report on senior management at the State colleges and universities (please see the attached document for the complete listing and explanation of proposed legislation).

A motion to support the bills that will be presented to the legislators at the March 21, 2007 Legislative Breakfast was made by A. Montare and seconded by J. Nagarian. Approved unanimously.

5. Master Agreement Negotiations Update

Tardi said she is concerned by how slowly the negotiations are moving. CWA has settled but has not been ratified. She expressed concern about the salary and benefits plans that are on the table for our Union, and questioned how we can accept something without knowing exactly what we are getting. Tardi stressed that it is important to let the Leadership team know exactly what the members' priorities and strike issues are.

Comments from members

A member questioned how AFT can apply pressure. Tardi said that sometimes pressure applied to legislators can change people's minds if they know we mean business. Tardi said that we would never buy a house sight unseen, and she cannot understand how the State can expect us to approve a health plan if we don't know the carrier. A member commented that it would be helpful to get a sense if people feel the benefits package is more important than the salary package. Another member questioned why some Union members are willing to take a hit on salary and benefits. He said the governor pitched that the CWA contract is a benefit to the public because it will solve problems. The member pointed out that the last contract started out with a 0% salary increase, and he thinks we should tell the State that when they are serious they can start talking to us because we have already done what we need to do. Tardi agreed, but noted that we are not the only Local negotiating with the State.

A member questioned if the salary increase applies to every sister university. Tardi responded yes, and said if the CWA contract is ratified, that gives a good indication of

what the salary increases will be across the board. Tardi said the proposed salary increases for our Union were written in a way that makes it look like a good deal even though it may not be when one considers the contribution to health benefits and the cost of living. A member commented that when it comes down to the health benefits versus the salary, there are many faculty and staff members who do not participate in the Traditional Plan so they are not interested in protecting it and are more interested in salary increases. Tardi responded that many issues will divide us. She said only 10% of the faculty are in the Traditional Plan but we have to remember that it is not just the Traditional Plan that is being affected. She said the State is proposing a nationwide PPO that we cannot even consider accepting until we know more about it. A member stated that we are going to be paying more under the new plan and the benefits will be decreased. The member explained that she went through a series of treatments that were covered by the Traditional Plan. When she calculated what the cost would have been under the proposed new plan, she determined that the treatments would have cost over \$500 more. She also noted that the extra financial burden occurs at a time when a person is ill and is not as financially secure. Tardi agreed and noted that healthy people do not realize the impact of the health plan until they are in a situation where they must depend on it. A member stated that 90% of the faculty members in the History Department are not in the Traditional Plan. Another member questioned the proposal for prescription drugs since they plan to double the co-pay for name brands.

A member stated that we should be in a strong position since we know what CWA is considering and we've already taken on the burden of what the governor wanted. Tardi responded that the problem is that the governor's cost saving plan is over a four year period of time and it is being built upon us taking another hit (in addition to those taken in the last contract). A discussion of the pros and cons of the State's proposal ensued.

A member stated that he has worked very hard at William Paterson for 13 years and moved up through the promotion scales, but recently discovered that his salary is low, and he must now put his house on the market to help finance his daughter's education. He said it is ridiculous when a full professor cannot support his or her own family. Tardi said those comments are in the true spirit of unionism because it is not about looking out for each of us individually, it is about the impact on the whole. A member asked if the State expects us to offer a counter proposal. Tardi said the initial agreement between the Council's negotiating team and the State's negotiating team was that there be a mutual exchange of full proposals. The Council respected the agreement but the State did not. The Council President then permitted the State and the Union to add to the proposals within the next three negotiation sessions.

A member questioned if there are any other issues other than salary and health benefits on the table. Tardi said one of the primary issues of the Administration is the hard-to-hire issue. She said the Council position is that we do not want a new salary structure to be created and we know that accreditation can be achieved without creating another tier of salary structure.

A member cautioned people about getting caught up on salary or benefits or both since CWA will be very different and we might be approaching it a different way. The member said we could be the ones pushing the envelope for the State on things not related to salary. Tardi said that generally, the first Union to negotiate will be the one to set the standards for the health and economic issues. Since AFT has many non-economic issues, our Union chose not to be the first one to negotiate with the State. A member questioned the implications for retirement benefits. Tardi said those seem to be protected as the State knows the power and vote of the population. Tardi said it has been her experience that negotiations can be moving extremely slowly and then at one meeting they will suddenly move forward and all the major issues will be put out on the table. She said luckily we have a supportive Leadership team who always represents us full force. Tardi noted that we need to be very careful with the media because teachers are typically portrayed in a negative way and people are misinformed in believing that faculty members only work a few hours per week. Tardi said she believes that public relations should be ongoing throughout the year, not just during negotiations. She said there are things we can do to improve public relations and that is one of the reasons she is running for the position at the State Council level. She noted that now is the time to start highlighting what professors contribute to their Institutions and the State. A member asked what Department Representatives can do to help. Tardi responded that we cannot forget what it's like for your colleagues with young families who are trying to pay off student loans and/or buy a home. She said part of the problem is that too often we become very self-oriented. Divide and conquer has been a successful strategy used by administrators at many universities.

6. **ART Revision Update**

C. Williams reported on a recent meeting with the Provost regarding the ART proposal. Although the Provost had verbally agreed to double the ART funding which is currently at .31% of the operating budget, he is now questioning where the Union Leadership got the .62% figure. The Provost also indicated that he doesn't want to commit to a specific percentage. Tardi noted that the .31% was provided by the Provost and that our members insisted on being provided a percentage commitment of the total operating budget to be dedicated to ART. The Provost indicated that he feels more comfortable with language stating that the University will make its best effort to fund the proposals that meet the criteria without stating an actual dollar amount or percentage. The understanding is that they would make every effort. Tardi said that essentially they are saying, "trust us, we'll take care of you." Tardi told the Provost she would bring the issue back to the membership, however, if he did not fund all proposals found to meet the criteria by the University ART Committee, she would "bite back and bite hard." A second issue raised by the Administration at the last minute of negotiations involved wanting only faculty who are at the associate level and above to serve on the University ART Committee. Gazzillo Diaz noted that the problem is not a lack research experience, but that there are not enough promotions available to appropriately move the assistants to the associate level. A member agreed, stating that when someone receives tenure, they should be qualified to be on the committee. Tardi said that point was argued, but the Provost refuted the argument.

Members were upset by the refusal of the Administration to negotiate this issue in good faith. A member asked if it is possible to adopt a motion that would help in future negotiations regarding this issue. Tardi said the Provost does not want to commit to a percentage of the budget. She said that during negotiations, it was understood that this was going to be a one year pilot program and the Administration made a verbal commitment to double the amount. A member said that one issue we should fight for is that promotion should automatically come with tenure. Tardi noted that while this is a good idea, an analysis of the data indicates that if promotions were provided automatically with tenure, no one at other ranks would be given promotions. A member stated that this seems like an injustice compared to other universities. Tardi noted that the extension of the requirement of tenure at other universities is six years instead of five. She further questioned whether assistant professors would be endangered in harsh economic times with the sixth year addition.

Tardi requested that the members address the issue on the agenda (the ART Proposal). A member stated that we have given the Administration a chance and they lied. The member suggested that we “bite back now.” Tardi said Leadership is willing to do whatever the membership wants, and if the membership wants to do a job action now, we will.

J. Wilkerson made a motion to turn down the ART Proposal offered by the Provost. A. Montare seconded.

Discussion: A member questioned why we should trust the Administration after they already lied once. Williams responded that the membership wanted to peg the proposal to a specific dollar amount and the Provost was told that there was a resolution from our members to ask him to commit to a certain amount. A member asked if the other colleges get a specific amount. Tardi responded no, but many have had a working program in place for years. She commented that there is a history on this issue that precedes this Provost, and we were told by previous administrators that Alternate Assignment had nothing to do with the fiscal issues. This Provost says that it does. A member questioned if we know how much they spend at other institutions. Tardi said that Montclair does not refuse funding to anyone who meets the ART criteria. A member asked if we can lock the .31% in as the absolute bottom line. Tardi said they won't lock in any number. They gave us the data of what currently exists and said they would double it, but they don't want to commit to a number. A member stated that if he said he will not turn down anyone then this good faith effort should be written into the agreement. A member asked how many meetings we have wasted talking about this issue, and said this is something we have to fight for. Tardi said before voting down the Provost's ART Proposal, perhaps the department representatives would like to take the issue back to the departments for discussion. She said if necessary, an emergency meeting can be called to vote on the proposal and discuss what job action, if any should be taken. She said anything that is not designated as a faculty responsibility such as committee work and advisement can come to a halt if that is what the membership decides to do.

The motion to turn down the Provost's ART Proposal carried with five opposed and

two abstentions. Tardi said a list of possible job actions will be discussed and disseminated to the Department Representatives.

7. New Business

Cindy Simon is a candidate for the Wayne Board of Education. A motion was made by Judy Matthew and seconded by Jane Hutchinson to contribute \$100 from the COPE fund to her campaign. The motion was approved unanimously.

8. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by S. Selke and seconded by C. Williams. Approved unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 2:02 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Jan Pinkston,
Recording Secretary