

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

Date: October 20, 2009
Location: UC 171
Time: 12:30 pm – 1:45 pm

Present: S. Tardi, C. Williams, G. Guerrieri, J. Pinkston, E. Matthews, S. Selke, F. Pavese, R. Wolk, M. Mwaura, G. Pope, K. Martin, K. Martus, G. Gerardi, K. Smith, D. Joslin, J. Najarian, S. Wollock, M. Turkish, R. Soto, L. Gazzillo Diaz, D. Koistinen, E. Martinez, S. Betts, T. Newman, A. Tesfaye, A. Montare, D. Catarina, A. Holpp Scala, J. Matthew, C. Simon, E. Goldstein, K. Malu, K. H. Kim, D. Nacin, M. Rosar, A. Cheo, L. Refsland, D. Potacco, S. Shalom

Items distributed to the Council and General Membership:

- 1) September 15, 2009 General and Executive/Local Council Meeting Minutes
- 2) Promotion Opportunities Rationale
- 3) Promotion Opportunities Data
- 4) Resolution on a Fair Contract for WPU's Sodexho Workers
- 5) Committee Listing

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 12:39 pm.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

A motion to adopt the agenda was made by J. Najarian, and seconded by K. Martus. Approved unanimously.

3. Approval of Minutes of the September 15, 2009 General Membership and Executive/Local Council Meeting. A motion to accept the minutes was made by A. Montare and seconded by K. Martus. Approved unanimously.

4. Financial Report – Vincent Baldassano, Senior V.P. Investments, Oppenheimer & Co. Inc.

Vincent Baldassano gave an overview of the AFT Local 1796 investments.

5. President's Report

a. Promotional Opportunities

Tardi discussed the strategy behind the "Promotional Opportunities Rationale" document that was used to negotiate with the administration. Tardi said the focus this year was on fairness and equity along all ranks and lines, and in all divisions. Tardi said promotions were given priority over range adjustments because of the

importance of promotions. She noted that over 60% of professors have already received range adjustments and it seemed fair to offer more opportunities to junior faculty who have not received a promotion and to also try to get more opportunities for professors to move from the associate level to the full professor level. Tardi further stated that the argument was that last year, the University gave 10% of the promotions to faculty members, and in previous years, that number was 10-13%. This year, the administration was proposing to offer promotions to only 3.5%. Tardi noted that while the outcome may not have been what we wanted, we are still doing fairly well as a Union when compared to other universities.

Tardi stated that the Union Leadership holds promotion and range adjustment workshops to give information, and then leaves it up to the individual member to decide whether to apply for a promotion or a range adjustment. She noted that if one's goal was to earn the maximum amount of money over one's career at WPU, the faculty member should first apply for a range adjustment. If one's priority is for the prestige and status associated with rank, then the faculty member should apply for a promotion. She stressed the fact that a faculty member can receive a range adjustment and then use the same folder to apply for a promotion the following year, however, the reverse does not apply. Eligibility for a range adjustment is four years at rank and the material used in the portfolio cannot include anything prior to the last promotion or range adjustment. Tardi explained that range adjustment requires excellence in teaching and one other area (scholarship or service), and meeting the criteria in the third area. A promotion requires excellence in all three areas (teaching, scholarship/creative development, and service).

Tardi noted that it is very difficult to argue for more promotional opportunities considering that some of the applicant pools from the previous year are so small. Tardi further noted that when it comes to negotiations, the Union Leadership is equitable and fair, and has consistently been accountable to all constituents (faculty, librarians, and professional staff).

b. Election for Governor – endorsement vote

Tardi stated that at the last meeting, all department representatives were asked to discuss the upcoming Governor's election with their departments and decide whether or not to endorse a candidate. Tardi noted that while the AFT Council and National are both supporting Corzine, our Local abstained from the vote at the last Council meeting, because we wanted to accurately represent the feelings of our Membership.

Questions and comments from the Membership

A member stated that she supports Corzine because Christie is anti-choice, anti-lesbian and gay rights, and anti-labor, and she cannot see how we can possibly consider supporting Christie. Another member stated that either Christie or Corzine will be governor, and Christie has issues with state employees and is

dangerous to public employee unions and adjunct faculty. A member stated that Corzine stole from him and furloughed him. Tardi said that while Corzine did steal from us, the alternative is someone (Christie), who is anti-labor and whose ultimate goal is to break up labor unions. A member said the third party candidate claims that higher education is a priority and wants to restore the budget for it. The member asked if we can believe that. Tardi said she believes he is telling people what they want to hear, and he has no idea how to implement a plan to fix the NJ budget deficit. Tardi stated that this election is particularly worrisome because we have a candidate who has stated that he will not sit at the table with labor unions. A member cautioned against voting for Daggett and urged members to think about the consequences of “throwing your vote away.” A member stated that the AFT Council has discussed that a vote for Daggett is really a vote for Christie. Tardi stated that the AFL-CIO endorsed Corzine very early on, and that labor did come out in full force at a recent rally because members are frightened about what can happen if Christie is elected. A member stated that one option is to say that we don’t support Corzine and we don’t like Christie, so we don’t endorse anyone. Tardi responded that we need to either endorse and support someone or we should not endorse anyone. A member stated that he is a republican, and he feels that the Republican Party did a great injustice by nominating Christie. The member further stated that Christie is a mean SOB, and we cannot back him under any circumstances. The member said that Christie is after labor unions and he intends to lay off 20,000 State workers. A member stated that sometimes things come down to elemental truths, and that the general level of the debate was not up to par. A member stated that she advocates supporting Corzine because we are a State institution, and Christie is against a woman’s right to choose. She further stated that he is against lesbian and gay marriage and already stated publically, with hand on heart, that he personally agrees that marriage is between a man and woman. The member stated that in addition, Corzine supports preschool education, and that is another issue impacting women.

A motion was made to support John Corzine for Governor by A. Holpp Scala, and seconded by F. Pavese.

A member stated that there are states where it is illegal for public employees to form Unions. A member stated that he disagrees with the constant demonization of candidates. A member asked what the candidates have been doing to win our vote. A member asked what happens if our Local votes to endorse Corzine. Tardi responded that the AFL-CIO has been inundating our Local with brochures that she has not sent out because she does not know where our Local stands.

A vote to support Corzine passed with an overwhelming majority and two abstentions.

c. Labor Resolution

Steve Shalom presented a resolution in support of the Sodexho workers on campus. Shalom and Christine Kelly drew up the resolution. Shalom stated that the Sodexho workers are entering contract negotiations, and they currently earn \$1.80 less per hour than Sodexho workers at Ramapo who do the same work. A member stated that people who are sub-contracted through William Paterson deserve a fair contract. Shalom read the resolution.

A motion to accept the resolution was made by S. Shalom, and seconded by A. Montare.

Discussion: A member stated that she strongly supports the Sodexho workers. She noted that when her department sponsored a Thanksgiving dinner for needy women and children from Paterson, the Sodexho workers who served the dinner were extremely kind and generous. A member questioned if the discrepancy in the pay is accurate. Shalom said he spoke to someone from SEIU (the Sodexho Union), and that person verified the information. A member asked if this is a Sodexho contract or a University contract. Shalom said it is a Sodexho contract. A member commented that Sodexho has pushed down the salaries as far as they can, and it is insulting to be in a situation when a person is not employed by the general employer they are working for, but that employer (William Paterson) is reinforcing the pricing situation. The member stated that this practice sends a message that the workers are not as valuable as the regular employees, and cited a case where Microsoft has been sued for seating contractors next to non-contractors and offering people different deals. Tardi said the important issue here is that Sodexho gets paid a lot of money and these workers are underpaid for the work they do. A member suggested that this resolution be circulated to other unions on campus for approval, and requested that the resolution be modified to include this statement. Tardi told Shalom that if he approved of this, she would distribute the resolution to the other unions on campus. Tardi noted that while Union issues and Faculty Senate issues often crisscross, she has already told Shalom that the Senate would probably not consider the issue. A member commented on safety concerns at the food court at the Valley Road campus. A Member stated that she agrees with the resolution in principal, however, she is uncomfortable with some of the language, specifically with the statistics that are being presented. Shalom commented that if our Union went on strike, we would appreciate the support of the other unions on campus. Tardi noted that the member was questioning if we can check the accuracy of the statistics. Shalom stated that the operative clauses in the resolution are for solidarity, calling on Sodexho to offer their employees fair labor standards. Shalom noted that in resolutions, it is the operative terms that have the clout and the other is background information. Tardi said we agree that we want the people who are working at this institution to have a fair contract. A member suggested that the word “whereas” be removed. Shalom stated that the information in the resolution was given to him by a SEIU staff person who has been working with the Sodexho workers. He did not go and ask to see the pay stubs or do an investigation. He

further stated that this is a level of scrutiny that we would not require of similar resolutions. Tardi stated that it would be very foolish for the SEIU person to provide inaccurate information that could be easily revealed. A member suggested that we address concerns about the accuracy of the information, by removing the word “whereas” and beginning each sentence with “we believe.” Tardi stated that a second option is to vote on the resolution without the paragraph and verify the information before including it in the resolution. A member stated that if William Paterson bids out to Sodexo, then is it really William Paterson who is determining the wages. Shalom responded no, that is not the case, but William Paterson can say that they will not engage in contracts with companies who do not offer fair contracts to their workers. Tardi asked the members who raised objections if the recommendation to eliminate the word “whereas” and begin each sentence with “we believe” was agreeable to them and they responded yes. The question was called.

A motion to approve the amended resolution passed with one opposed, and one abstention.

6. V.P. for Negotiations Update

Guerrieri reported that workshops for sabbatical leave, retention and tenure, promotion and range adjustment, professional staff performance based promotions, and librarian range adjustment are planned. The details will be available soon.

Guerrieri explained that the ART pilot program for 2008-2010 is now at the halfway mark. The Union Leadership is currently working to convert the pilot program to policy and would like input from the Membership regarding any problems or issues with the program. A member asked when the policy will be in place, and noted that ART applications are due in one week. Tardi said she is aware of the approaching deadline and would like to convert the pilot program to policy as soon as possible. Tardi said the Provost’s office is concerned about the reporting process because individuals who applied for ART under the pilot program were required to submit a progress update in their faculty achievement year-end report, and some individuals provided one or two sentences. Tardi said that while the administration is not satisfied with two sentences, her argument is that the administration should have specified the page length. She said the language does not currently specify page length for the interim reports. A member asked if a person who is applying for ART can also sit on the committee. Tardi responded that the pool of people sitting on the committee is very small, and the ART committee is the only Union committee where applicants are allowed to serve on the committee. A member commented that this problem could be solved by saying that anyone who volunteers to be on the committee is automatically awarded ART. Tardi stated that she did not believe that this will be acceptable to the administration, but that she and the negotiator would offer it as an option. Tardi noted that there is a problem with getting people to volunteer to serve on committees. Tardi stated that the administration has argued in the past that they

like to have people who are very active in research to be the ones who review the proposals. Tardi asked if the members are satisfied with the ART decision making process and the awards. A member stated that one person applied for four semesters and was awarded three, and was then accepted into an institute and was awarded another semester later in the year. Tardi stated that faculty members should not “double dip.” Tardi noted that she served as the Union observer the first year of the pilot ART program, and found the process to be thorough and fair.

7. V.P. for Grievances Update

Williams stated that he is in the midst of working on faculty retention issues, and noted that various departments have rules that sometimes conflict with policy. He further stated that he is working to clean up the process and procedural errors. He said many of the problems arise when individuals misinterpret the policies. Tardi said there are no due dates for folders, and this presents a problem in large departments because members are rushing to read the folders.

8. Old Business

Selke stated that the Professional Staff NL study ends in February 2010. She said that several people have dropped out of the study and it is not going very well.

9. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by J. Matthew, and seconded by A. Montare. The meeting adjourned at 1:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jan Pinkston,
Recording Secretary
[Edited:]