

P-fac NEWS

Serving the Part-time teaching community at Columbia College

May, 1999

COURSE ASSIGNMENT LIMIT

We've heard from a number of members concerned about the contractual limit of two classes per semester. The contract is supposed to embody an already-existing rule which (like the contract) allowed for some exceptions. We'd like to hear from our readers about their experiences with this limit.

INSURANCE

All part-time faculty at Columbia are eligible to sign up for insurance through the National Adjunct Faculty Guild. There are two plans; neither is an HMO. For information, write NAFG, P.O. Box 130117, Ann Arbor, MI48113-0117; or fax to 743-741-8195.

NAFG also publishes *The Adjunct Advocate* magazine, offering a dossier service for job-hunters, book discounts, and other benefits. If you didn't recently receive a flyer detailing all this, call us at 773-281-0975; or check out their website at <http://www.sai.com/adjunct>. The website has descriptions of the health plans.

" UNION SCALE "

Our efforts have had a pleasing spillover effect for part-time faculty not covered by the contract. P-fac negotiated on behalf of those in the "bargaining unit," and the contract applies only to them. Excluded are part-time faculty new to the college, along with those who are also grad students, full-time staff, and a few others. Excluded part-time faculty, however, are reporting pay increases. Experienced teachers are being paid

AGENCY FEE/ DUES CHECKOFF

Have you sent in your dues /agency fee checkoff form? If not, get it in now. If you're a member of the bargaining unit and you fail to meet your dues / agency fee obligation, you may not be rehired next fall

according to experience, as if they were in the bargaining unit. Newcomers received a smaller increase, delayed, apparently, till negotiations were over.

AROUND THE TOWN

Organizing ...Part-time faculty everywhere face serious professional and financial problems and a bleak future. Increasingly, part-timers are responding by organizing, as P-fac did.

Faculty and staff at the American Academy of Art have filed a petition for a bargaining authorization election, similar to ours of a year and a half ago. Their group, however, represents full- as well as part-time faculty,

and staff as well. A majority have signed authorization cards.

PT faculty are actively organizing at Roosevelt University and at the International Academy of Art and Design, where many "part-timers" teach four and five classes – without any benefits. Our colleagues at Roosevelt call for a new deal for the forgotten part-time college teacher.

Negotiations . . . At Oakton Community College, the Adjunct Faculty Association (affiliated with the IEA) is renegotiating its contract. And AFSCME local 3506, a group of part-timers teaching GED and ESL in City Colleges, is faced with an intransigent, politicized administration in its contract renewal talks. We wish them success.

Part-time Faculty Conference

Part-timers from throughout the area met Saturday at the Harold Washington Library to discuss organizing, compare notes, and consider a metro-wide association of part-time faculty. Such a group would encourage organization of collective bargaining units, and offer a number of services and benefits and services, possibly including group health insurance. Among those present there was a good deal of support for this idea, which the National Education Association is considering supporting. The conference included representatives from a dozen schools, some with well-established part-time groups, some just getting started.

IEA NEWS

Mystery mail . . . We've been getting all sorts of unexpected mail. P-fac is affiliated with the Illinois Education Association and the National Education Association, and P-fac members should be getting publications from both organizations. School bus drivers in Wyoming and kindergarten teachers downstate may seem strange bedfellows, but we do share some common interests in education. Not so incidentally, those are the folks who helped finance the legal advice and negotiating assistance that have helped us so much over the past two years.

Inexplicable elections. . . Almost inexplicable are some of these ballots for various IEA and NEA offices. "Vote for no more than 38..." P-fac News will try to interpret some of this in the future. One position that's important for us is the IEA's higher education council; some people wrote in Joe Laiacona of P-fac.

Another important position is representative to IEA region 33 (believe it or not). Every local association in the IEA is also part of a "region," usually a half dozen or so groups of teachers, who (among other things) hire a staff person. In May, P-fac's members will elect a representative. Ballots should be arriving soon.

Plaudits for P-fac . . . P-fac negotiating committee chair Joe Laiacona got a standing ovation at the recent IEA Representative Assembly – 1000 delegates from IEA local associations throughout the state, who meet every year to make basic policy and choose state officers. One policy OK'd this time: a statewide dues increase to hire an organizer to help part-time college teachers. As part of the IEA, P-fac will elect its own delegates to the next Representative Assembly; we hope to organize a part-timers' caucus.

JOIN P-fac!

No need to rehash the reasons this time; please don't forget. If you need info, call Pete Insley at 344-7545.

HAYMARKET

The most dramatic incident in the history of Chicago's working people and their struggle for justice took place on May 1- 4, 1886. Thousands of Chicago workers went on strike, joining a nationwide campaign for an eight-hour day. At the McCormick Reaper Company, striking workers clashed with police, and one was killed by police bullets. A protest meeting was called for the next day at the Haymarket at Randolph and Desplaines. Despite some angry rhetoric, the meeting was peaceful, and as a light rain began to fall, the crowd began to drift away. But an ambitious police inspector, horrified by the tenor of the speakers, marched 100 police officers over to the meeting and ordered it to disperse. Suddenly, someone in the crowd threw a bomb. The police drew guns, firing wildly. In the end, eight officers were killed.

In the aftermath, police rounded up scores of radical unionists, and charged eight of them with murder – though they had no idea who threw the bomb, and no evidence that any of the eight were involved. The eight were anarchists – convinced that elections were all stolen, and government inevitably the servant of oppressive employers – and their beliefs proved more important than their actions at the Haymarket. With a judge eager to convict, and a jury selected for its anti-union beliefs, the defen-

dants were convicted. Four were hanged; one committed suicide to escape the gallows; three were imprisoned until Governor John Peter Altgeld pardoned them. The Haymarket martyrs' deaths shocked the world, but far from squelching workers' efforts, it inspired international struggles to organize for justice and democracy at work.

TEACH AT ANOTHER COLLEGE?

Part-time faculty are organizing. If you're interested in learning what's going on, or want to start something yourself, call Tom Suhrbur at 630-495-3250.

COLLEGE COUNCIL ELECTIONS

New ballots have been sent out for part-time faculty representatives to the College Council, correcting an error in listing candidates and including two who had been omitted. Though the council seems a bit remote from the daily work and teaching of most part-timers, it is an important institution for shaping the college's future. P-fac makes no endorsements, but we urge everyone to vote.

BOOK REVIEW

Will Teach for Food: Academic Labor in Crisis

Cary Nelson, editor

Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997.

Pp. xii + 308. \$49.95 cloth; \$19.95 paper.

Reviewed by John Stevenson

With its title taken from Gary Trudeau's 1996 series of "Doodlesbury" strips skewering the treatment of part-timers by universities, and subtitled "academic labor in crisis" (that's us!), this looks to be a welcome look at the realities of our lives as working teachers.

Actually, it's a little disappointing: the bulk of *Will Teach for Food* is focused on the strike by graduate assistants at Yale University a few years ago, with only two articles specifically devoted to part-time teaching. But the strike at Yale was an important one for us too. Graduate teaching assistants work under roughly similar conditions to our own, and issues they faced in organizing a union and struggling for a better deal are also analogous. Further, the Yale strike was important in focusing attention on the exploitative realities within even the most prestigious universities, and the fight to change those realities.

There has actually been a long history, beginning in the late thirties, of union struggles by Yale's clerical, technical, service and maintenance workers, a short history of which is given here. Graduate students, who had been organizing sporadically since the 1970s, in 1990 changed the name of their organization to the Graduate Employees and Students Organization (GESO), and allied themselves with these workers and their union. Two of the pieces in this collection come from Yale graduate students who have been involved in the struggle there, while other analysis of the events at Yale come from sympathetic professors at other universities. Especially valuable are essays by Rick Wolff, well-known radical economist at the University of Massachusetts ("Why Provoke this Strike? Yale and the U.S. Economy"), who offers an explanation of why Yale would provoke the strikes of 1995-96 in the midst of general prosperity and a rapidly growing endowment (\$5 billion and growing, after expenses, at the rate of \$1 million a day); and Michael Berube (Professor of English at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign) who seeks to explain the generally hostile attitude toward GESO on the part of the Yale senior faculty (who bristled paternalistically at independent action by "their" graduate students) and many members of the Modern Language Association (although the general MLA membership did vote to censure Yale for its actions).

Closer to home, Linda Ray Pratt ("Disposable Faculty: Part-Time Exploitation as Management Strategy") contributes a good survey of the part-time situation and the issues pertaining to it, and Karen Thompson ("Alchemy in the Academy: Moving Part-Time Faculty from Piecework to Parity"), recounts her experience in organizing a union for part-time faculty at Rutgers University, and emphasizes the way in which part-timers and graduate assistants "function as reserve labor forces" (p. 288). Both have been active in the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) on the issue: Pratt chaired the organization's committee which issued a 1993 policy report on non-tenure-track faculty, and Thompson chairs the AAUP's Committee G on part-time and non-tenure-track appointments.

Other contributors write about the implications of the recently much-touted "electronic classroom" and other issues relating to contemporary higher education. All in all it's good to have an anthology such as this, especially since it not only provides information, research and analysis! but takes a stand: "This book makes no pretense...of being a neutral collection," says Cary Nelson in his introduction. "We offer *Will Teach for Food* as a call for increased involvement and moral responsibility."

P-fac NEWS

Part-time Faculty Association at Columbia, IEA-NEA

For more information call our hotline: 773-281-0975

WEBSITE: WWW.PFAC.ORG EMAIL: INFO@PFAC.ORG

We are always looking for feedback and contributions.

Editor: Christopher Thale; designer: Jeanne Reilly