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Retirees Newsletter

Professional Staff Congress
Jack Judd, Editor

From the editor: Since the upcoming Luncheon on June 18 marks a milestone in the history of the Professional Staff Congress, it has been deemed appropriate to reprint Irwin Yellowitz's following article.

I. CELEBRATE THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE PSC

By Irwin Yellowitz

In April 1972, the Professional Staff Congress was founded from a merger of the Legislative Conference and the United Federation of College Teachers.

The Retirees Chapter will celebrate the 40th anniversary of the PSC at its annual June luncheon on June 18.

My history in the PSC goes back to 1965 when I joined the United Federation of College Teachers. Many of you have histories in the PSC that also stretch far back into your lives. We want to celebrate your many years of being part of a vibrant union, and so the leadership of the Retirees Chapter takes special

pleasure in inviting you to the luncheon on June 18.



Image (circa 1972) symbolizing the merger of the Legislative Conference and UFCT into the PSC.

Our program at the luncheon will honor the two living presidents of the PSC, Barbara Bowen (2000-present) and Irwin Polishook (1976-2000). They have served for 36 of the PSC's 40 years. The other president, Belle Zeller, held office from the founding in 1972 until 1976. We will honor Barbara and Irwin for their leadership of a union that advanced the legitimate interests of our members; defended the university against fierce attacks, as during the fiscal crisis of the 1970s, and during the recent and ongoing financial

assault on CUNY; and served as a national leader in higher education unionism.

These were difficult tasks, and Barbara and Irwin did not do them alone. They were part of a leadership team that included not only the other officers, but members of the Executive Council, the Delegate Assembly, chapter leadership, and after 1986, the Trustees and Advisory Council of the Welfare Fund.

Thus, when we honor Barbara and Irwin, we honor a much larger group of dedicated people who have made the PSC a strong union.

the luncheon program. For example, how did the union's actions preserve CUNY, and affect you directly, during the fiscal crisis of the 1970s? How has the union protected you through the grievance process? How have your working conditions improved, including salaries, workload, pensions and health benefits?

How did the attitude of administrators changed toward you once you had the procedural protections of the contract? How has the union's work in Albany to protect CUNY's budget from destructive cuts affected your work? How, in all sorts of private ways, has being part of a strong, democratic union made you feel better about your career? Please share the answers to some of these questions and whatever else is important to you at the luncheon.

We plan to record the program so it will be available through the Retiree Newsletter to our retired colleagues, through the *Clarion* and PSC website to all union members, and through the Archives to researchers now and in the future.

II. APRIL CHAPTER MEETING

Reexamining the Cultural History of Capitalism

By Joel Berger

Destroying long held myths about immigrant upward mobility and success in the United States is a difficult task. Yet, as Jocelyn Wills, Associate Professor of History at Brooklyn College, described to the Retiree Chapter at its May meeting, that task is the focus of her current

**Down on Unions?
Think twice.**

Last winter, in an advertisement on these pages, we advised you to "think twice" about applying to the City University of New York. A tenure quota had been imposed by the Board of Higher Education October 29, 1973.

On April 22, 1974, the new Board rescinded the quota.

How did it happen?
Principle motivated the new Board — the principle that the sole standard for tenure must be excellence. A quota nullifies the decisiveness of excellence, jeopardizes the best teachers and scholars, and undermines academic freedom and academic quality.

While principle prevailed, power helped.
Our union mobilized the entire instructional staff in the struggle against the tenure quota. Those already tenured, the untenured, nonclassroom professionals, the teaching faculty, faculty councils, all closed ranks behind our union.

The National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers, battling each other elsewhere, banded together here, with all the force and influence of their 1,800,000 members. So did the New York State United Teachers, a 200,000-strong merged AFT-NEA statewide union, and the New York City Central Labor Council, representing 1,200,000 unionists.

This kind of clout can be marshaled only by a union.

So if you are thinking of applying for appointment to the City University, a tenure quota need no longer deter you.

Wherever you are, if you are thinking over the erosion of your professional and economic status, think union.

For further information, write to:
**Professional Staff Congress
City University of New York**
Local 206, American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO • National Education Association
New York State AFL-CIO • New York State United Teachers • New York City Central Labor Council
25 West 43rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10036
Dr. Belle Zeller, President

This statement appeared in
The Chronicle of Higher Education, May 20, 1974 issue and in
The Bulletin of the N.A.A.U.P., Summer, 1974 issue.

A paid advertisement that appeared in the Chronicle of Higher Education in 1973 when a PSC campaign got the CUNY Board to rescind its policy of tenure quotas

We also know that all of you have memories of how the PSC affected your professional and personal lives over these 40 years. We would like you to speak briefly about this during

research. The area in which she is working is known as "failure studies," which is actually a study of a component of the cultural history of capitalism. Scott Sandage, in his book "Born Losers," observed, "Failure is not the dark side of the American dream it is the foundation of it." That statement spurred Professor Wills to investigate further.

As a Canadian coming to the U.S. twenty years ago, she wanted to find out why American thinking differs so much from Canadian thinking. In the late 19th century and early 20th century many Americans didn't join unions, and, "so many didn't protest conditions; but rather accommodated themselves to them." The prevailing view was that the "United States offers this exceptional opportunity to go from rags to respectability, and then for the favored few, on to great riches."

Using the Dun records archived at the Baker Library at Columbia University, Professor Wills looked at the annotated reports of those seeking credit in Brooklyn from 1865 to the 1930s. She wanted to test assumptions of social mobility by following the histories of 780 people who wanted to start a small business of their own.

"I don't have one single, solitary, success story to report to you today from the 780 people I have been following backward and forward in time—at least not in terms of the standard trope about upward mobility over time," she said. Professor Wills then shared a story of "one of her favorite friends," Alfred

Frank. She read from the original credit reports from 1884, and drew the conclusion that his story is typical of upward strivers who wanted to succeed in business. The people she is studying find themselves in an upward trajectory in a boom, and when the bust hits all find themselves collapsing with it. These stories reinforce the nature of boom or bust capitalism.

Professor Wills concluded by saying, "The very discussion of mobility goes relatively unquestioned in the historical narrative." She believes that, "We are at a stage in global capitalism that if we don't start asking questions about why we value a certain kind of mobility—why we value material gains as a measure of a person's success, then the road ahead does not look very pretty indeed." A lively question and answer session followed Professor Wills' presentation.

III. HEALTH AND SAFETY

Summer Heat Can Be a Killer

By Ezra Seltzer



Exposure to excessive heat may lead to serious illness or death. It is very important to monitor the symptoms of heat stress and take the appropriate action as soon as possible.

Particularly susceptible are people with heart disease, diabetics, pregnant women, the obese, the elderly and people using alcohol, drugs or some prescription medications.

The environmental factors that affect the amount of heat stress a person faces in a hot area are temperature, humidity and air flow. When exposed to excess heat, the body responds in two ways. First, it increases blood flow. Blood circulates close to the skin so that heat can be dissipated into the environment. Secondly, it responds by sweating. The evaporation of sweat cools the body.

High room temperature makes it difficult for the body to eliminate its own excess heat, and high humidity makes sweating difficult. The body thus stores more heat. As the core temperature rises, the heartbeat increases. The individual will exhibit symptoms of varying severity.

Some of the most common symptoms of heat stress are:

- Loss of concentration
- Weakness

- Nausea
- Headache
- Giddiness
- Thirst
- Muscle fatigue
- Fainting

Home Security

By Ezra Seltzer

Before leaving on vacation, make sure your home is secured:

- Unplug electrical appliances (except the refrigerator).
- Turn off gas pilots and water faucets.
- Notify newspaper service to temporarily refrain from delivering the news paper.
- Arrange for someone to pick up your mail or have the post office withhold delivery when you are away.
- Lock all windows.
- Leave a key with informed relatives, friends and neighbors, and inform them of your itinerary and the telephone number at which you can be reached in an emergency.
- Set a timer to turn lights on and off, or ask someone to do it for you.
- Notify your local police or neighborhood security patrol. Tell them when you are leaving and when you will be back.