

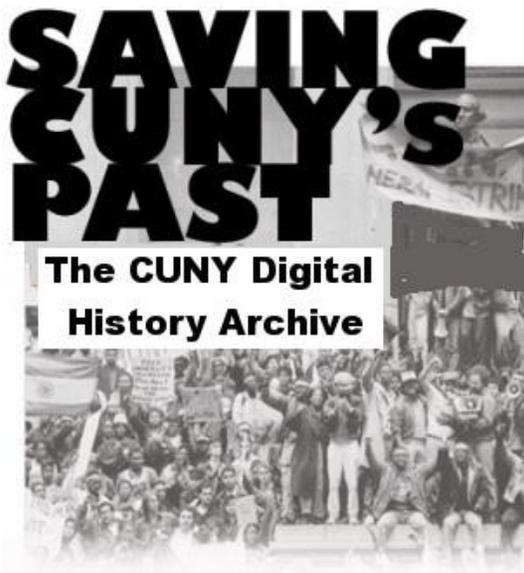


November 2014 Issue 4
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RETIREES NEWSLETTER

Professional Staff Congress
Jack Judd, Editor
psc-cuny.org/retirees

I. DECEMBER 1 CHAPTER MEETING.



The 2,600 members of the Retirees Chapter are a living repository of CUNY history and champions of higher education. We have logged over 80,000 cumulative years at the University as educators, professionals and scholars. That is why “WE” are going to be part of the program when **Steve Brier, Andrea Vasquez** and **Chloe Smolarski**, from the Graduate Center, take us through an interactive tour of the new **CUNY DIGITAL HISTORY ARCHIVE**. The archive is collecting stories, in text, sound and image, of

the many events, people, and communities that have been critical to CUNY’s democratic mission. It will make these materials available to the public as an open access digital repository.

Join us at 1 pm, Monday, December 1, in the PSC Union Hall, 61 Broadway, 16th floor. Bring your memories – and any photos, documents, texts, etc. that you think might spark discussion of important moments in your college’s or CUNY’s history.

Light refreshments will be served.

The chapter’s Executive Committee will meet at 10:30 AM in the Justice Room on the 15th floor. The meeting is open to all members.

II. JANUARY 12th LUNCHEON:
There is still time to make a reservation. Reservations are \$26 per person. An invitation to our 22nd annual winter luncheon is either attached and/or available online at: tinyurl.com/Jan12thLuncheon

As in the past, the luncheon will be held at John Jay College of Criminal Justice. We will have with us the

independent documentary film producer, Zahida Pirani, who will screen and discuss her latest film, *Judith, Portrait of a Street Vendor*. The film is a short documentary that takes the audience on an intimate journey into the daily life of Judith, a street vendor from Guatemala who lives and works in New York City. Judith exposes the routine obstacles she and her fellow immigrant vendors face daily on the city's streets and reveals her own struggles and hopes as an immigrant worker, mother, activist and community organizer.

III. SYNOPSIS OF THE NOVEMBER CHAPTER MEETING.

The following summary has been prepared by Joel Berger, vice-chairman of the Retirees Chapter.

Working toward Single-Payer National Health Insurance

Will a single-payer national health care system that is a publicly funded, privately delivered partnership ever be established in the United States? If the efforts of Dr. Oliver Fein and Physicians for a National Health Program are successful, the current Affordable Care Act (ACA) will be replaced by a single-payer approach.

Dr. Fein, professor of public clinical health at Weill-Cornell Medical College, presented a comprehensive analysis of the ACA at the November chapter meeting.

Beginning with an overview of the history and politics involved in creating and passing the legislation, Dr. Fein observed that President

Obama did not "start from scratch" but built upon the private sector rather than the public sector. Allowing open enrollment in the Medicare program for anyone who wanted it would have made for a better system. But the political climate made it very difficult to pass a law with that approach, so Congress stripped away the public option.



A requirement for an individual mandate was expanded to also include an employer mandate to provide health insurance to workers (with several limitations). Dr. Fein argued that, "This kind of approach, mandating individuals and employers to buy health insurance was absolutely essential to the survival of the health insurance industry because they were offering a defective product and they were losing enrollees."

Dr. Fein then highlighted the deficiencies of the ACA in providing access, the cost of premiums, and administrative costs. To replace the ACA, he proposed "Medicare for All", a single-payer model that would build upon the original Medicare program that would de-link health insurance from employment status, expand

Medicare coverage and eliminate co-pays and deductibles. Drug coverage would be expanded and taken away from private insurers under this model as well.

A successful national health program should address the following problems: (1) declining access, (2) escalating costs, (3) lack of comprehensive benefits, (4) restricted choice, (5) uneven quality and (6) insufficient primary care.

"And, then, of course, you have to figure out how to pay for it," Dr. Fein noted. Examining each of the problem areas with a systematic comparison between the current ACA and a single-payer model, Dr. Fein built a cogent, logical case for the single-payer system. To pay for it he offered a variety of ways to reduce costs, including the use of progressive taxation in payroll taxes, and taxation of corporate earnings.

In summary, Dr. Fein pronounced the ACA, "in some ways a step forward, because it expands coverage through Medicaid and subsidies to buy private health insurance". But in some ways, he said, "it is really is a step backwards, because it gives tax payers' dollars to private health insurance companies." His conclusion: "the ACA is a great leap sideways."

Dr. Fein's talk was enhanced by a PowerPoint presentation packed with information and analysis. Download it at psc-cuny.org/FeinSlides.

IV. SAFETY NET WORKING GROUP REVISES BOOKLET;

EMBARKS ON NEW STATE-WIDE INITIATIVE. Attacks on our nation's social safety net have been fierce, well-funded and sustained over the past 35 years. When the GOP takes control of the U.S. Senate in January, new efforts to cut programs like Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid will surely be on their agenda (with, unfortunately, help from some Democrats). As retirees, we must fight with a new urgency to keep and expand the benefits that we have earned.



Cover of the new safety net booklet

The PSC's Social Safety Net Working Group, which is mainly a Retirees Chapter initiative, has revised and expanded its booklet to help equip activists for the fight. The booklet, *Defending the Social Safety Net: A Call to Action*, describes policy

proposals to protect pensions and federal safety-net programs (Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, food stamps and unemployment benefits). It exposes the budget cutters' disingenuous plans to "save" safety-net programs, and provides the background information and arguments you need to make a vigorous defense of the safety net.

In 2015, committee members will take the booklet on the road in a series of workshops designed to help NYSUT locals around the state build coalitions and engage their communities in defense of the social safety net.

You can pick up a pick up a print copy of the booklet at the PSC office or download it at: psc-cuny.org/SNbrochure

V. VOTE-COPE. In October, you should have received a letter asking for contributions to VOTE-COPE, the union's political action fund. If you haven't given, please consider doing so.

A small number of members reported receiving an empty envelope instead of the COPE solicitation. If that happened to you, please accept our apologies. You can download the COPE letter at: <http://tinyurl.com/RetireesCOPE>.

With Medicare, Social Security and other programs under attack and the university we devoted our careers to underfunded, we need strong voices speaking up for us in Washington, Albany and City Hall. With VOTE COPE funding, the PSC can increase

its electoral clout, grow its political influence and fight more effectively for these programs and our university.

Contributions to COPE are separate from your retiree union dues. PSC/CUNY COPE is part of the VOTE-COPE program supported by active and retired members of the PSC's statewide and national affiliates, New York State United Teachers and the American Federation of Teachers.

The Retirees Chapter has always led the way in contributions to COPE. Let's keep our record intact.

Please make a contribution by check (payable to PSC/CUNY COPE). We suggest a donation of \$80, but give whatever you can. Send checks to PSC-CUNY, 15th floor, 61 Broadway, New York, NY 10467.

VI. ATTENTION SNOWBIRDS.

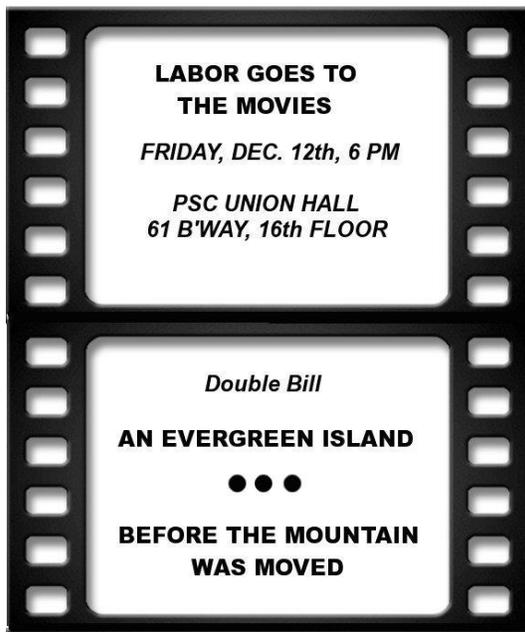


The Florida branch of the Retirees Chapter holds its annual luncheon in early February. If you are a snowbird (i.e. a northerner who resides in Florida during the winter months) and would like to attend the luncheon,

send your Florida contact information to retirees@psccmail.org. We'll make sure you are sent an invitation.

VII. LABOR GOES TO THE MOVIES: *An Evergreen Island & Before the Mountain Was Moved*

This year's Labor Goes to the Movies film series presents a group of films—documentary and fiction—that take the threat of apocalypse as their premise. These two documentaries present stories of ordinary flesh-and-blood people's resistance to corporate resource extraction that destroys their villages and houses, leaves the land uninhabitable and useless, and poisons water for people and wildlife.



An Evergreen Island. The people of Bougainville Island, geographically part of the Solomon Islands but politically ruled by Papua New Guinea, shut down a copper mine that savaged the land stolen from one of their villages, and went to war.

An Evergreen Island (2000, Australia, Amanda King and Fabio Cavadini) presents the islanders' accounts of their learning to live with ingenuity and resilience through the retaliatory trade blockade imposed upon them by the government of Papua New Guinea.

Before the Mountain Was Moved.

This inspiring documentary (1970, US, Robert K. Sharpe) shows the struggle of the residents of Pine Knob, Raleigh County, West Virginia, to work together as they battle powerful strip-mining companies and convince the West Virginia state legislature to pass a strong law requiring mine companies to reclaim the land they destroyed. The focus is on Ellis Bailey, a former miner, as his plainspoken eloquence brings mesmerizing authority to his account of the destruction of his home throughout the film, culminating in his brilliant reluctant testimony before the state legislature. The film was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature in 1970.

Friday, December 12, 6 pm, PSC Union Hall, 16th floor, 61 Broadway. Doors open at 6 p.m. A discussion will follow the films. Light refreshments provided.