



October 2014 Issue 3
Academic Year 2014-2015

**RETIREES
NEWSLETTER**

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

NOVEMBER CHAPTER MEETING.
Our next monthly meeting will be Monday, November 3, at 1:00 PM in the PSC Union Hall, 16th floor, 61 Broadway. Our guest speaker will be Dr. Oliver Fein, president of Physicians for a National Health Program and professor of clinical public health at Cornell University. The topic will be "Prospects and Pitfalls for a Single Payer Healthcare Program in the Era of the Affordable Care Act."



After the question and answer session following Dr. Fein's talk, Larry Morgan, executive director of the PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund, will be available to respond to general issues concerning the Welfare Fund.

The Chapter's Executive Committee

will meet at 10:30 AM in the Justice Room on the 15th floor. The meeting is open to members

JANUARY 12TH LUNCHEON: An invitation to the luncheon is available online at :
tinyurl.com/Jan12thLuncheon
Make your reservations now.

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 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.

REMINDER ABOUT DUES:
Retirees' annual dues (\$71) are due for the period 9/1/14 through 8/31/15. The PSC sent out reminder notices to those that have not paid

as of October 1. If you would like to check and be sure that your dues have been received and paid, call the PSC Membership Department at 212-354-1252.

In November, we will remove the names of people who have not paid their dues from the chapter membership list. (PSC Constitution, Article III, Section 8 c: "An individual on direct payment who has not submitted dues payments for two (2) consecutive months shall no longer be a member in good standing. Such an individual shall lose the right to vote, nominate, run for or hold office, and shall be dropped from membership after a reasonable time.") There is union-wide PSC election this spring. If you are not an active member by 12/1/14, you will not be able to vote.

SYNOPSIS OF OCTOBER

CHAPTER MEETING: *Here is a summary of panelists' remarks made at the October 6 chapter meeting, courtesy of Joel Berger, vice chairman.*

Building upon the energy generated by the People's Climate March in September, the chapter meeting focused on activism both statewide and locally at CUNY.

Professor Jean Grassman, of Brooklyn College, outlined the "watchdog" role of the PSC Health and Safety Committee. Working for a healthy workplace environment on each college, members of the Watchdogs Committee will visit the campus to investigate conditions and make recommendations when

invited by the local PSC chapter. The Watchdogs Committee also works to reduce CUNY's carbon footprint and to support sustainability plans for New York City. For example, they press to ensure that new buildings at CUNY are LEED certified, to reduce CUNY's use of electricity and its production of carbon dioxide emissions.

Many of CUNY's classrooms are in "awful condition," according to Grassman. "It is an equity issue that our students have decent learning spaces." Improving CUNY's teaching and learning conditions is a priority for the Watchdogs Committee.



Grassman also noted that there should be greater student and faculty involvement in recycling programs at the campuses. And she promoted "green skills," such as composting,

waste reduction, urban gardening. Students, faculty and staff should become more involved in these projects.

In the future, the Watchdogs Committee might explore projects that affect the communities in which CUNY students live, such as creating more access to green space and improving mass transit.

Following Professor Grassman's report, Professor Ken Gould, director of the Urban Sustainability Program at Brooklyn College, described how many issues of concern to the PSC Health and Safety Watchdogs Committee have been incorporated into his interdisciplinary bachelor's degree program. Gould integrated pictures from the climate march into his presentation to highlight the emphasis on environmental justice and union involvement that is built into the Urban Sustainability Program. Faculty from three different departments—Earth and Environmental Science, Economics and Sociology—created courses for the program are team taught by faculty from all three departments. The program has requirements in all three departments, and students select one of the areas of study as a concentration. "The major is built upon three pillars: ecological sustainability, economic sustainability and social justice equity sustainability," said Gould.

The culmination of the program is a capstone course in which students in the three concentrations are brought together to serve a client: Brooklyn College. They work together to

invent policies that will have an impact on sustainability at the college. Professor Gould urges faculty at other campuses to "steal this model."

Well represented at the People's Climate March was a contingent from Food and Water Watch. Eric Weltman, of the Brooklyn office of this national, non-profit environmental group, explained the science behind fracking and the destruction resulting from the process.



For background on fracking see this excerpt from foodandwaterwatch.org:

"Fracking, also called "hydraulic fracturing," is a destructive process that corporations like Halliburton, BP and ExxonMobil use to extract natural gas and oil from rock that lies deep underground. They drill a deep well and inject millions of gallons of toxic fracking fluid – a mix of water, sand and harsh chemicals – at a high enough pressure to fracture the rock and release the oil or gas.

Fracking is exempt from major environmental laws, including the

Safe Drinking Water Act, and spills and accidents are far too common.”

Weltman warned about the potential impact of fracking on the water supply in New York: As a result of fracking, radon, a radioactive gas that can cause increased rates of lung cancer, leaches into the ground water. And the methane produced during fracking is a powerful greenhouse gas, which traps atmospheric heat and contributes to the rate of climate change.

Contrary to claims that fracking helps the economy, Weltman asserted that “the jobs are dead end jobs.”

Fracking also disrupts the community and eventually leads to a decrease in property values, according to Weltman. “The public should realize that there are alternatives to natural gas, but no alternatives to clean water,” he said. “Energy transitions should be made before the planet is destroyed, not after.”

A coalition of 250 different environmental, civic, labor, health, and political groups have banded together to stop fracking in New York State. Several thousand businesses have come out against fracking, along with networks of farmers and students who also oppose it. Eric Weltman's message to PSC Retirees is “become active in the anti-fracking movement.” The decision to have fracking here will be made by Governor Cuomo. “Concerted efforts must continue so that the Governor will support a ban on fracking,” he said.

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

**LABOR GOES TO THE MOVIES:
The Birds (Alfred Hitchcock, 1963)**

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.



Hitchcock's *The Birds* (1963, US) is his last undisputed masterpiece. The story of a small-town California man, living with his overbearing mother and drawn to an alluring, independent blonde socialite, showcases many of Hitchcock's themes, but eliminates his traditional human villains (spies, thieves, murderers and the like) for the very forces of nature. As birds of every species unite in sudden fury to invade, attack and destroy, this small town is thrown into a great panic and

civilization itself starts to unravel.
The bird attacks are spontaneous,
overwhelming, brutal and utterly
mysterious.

Friday, November 14, 6 PM, PSC
Union Hall, 16th floor, 61 Broadway.
Doors open at 6 PM. A discussion
will follow the film. Light
refreshments provided.