

June 21, 2007

RESOLUTION ON BOYCOTT OF ISRAELI UNIVERSITIES

Passed

Whereas, on May 30, 2007, the University and College Union (UCU), which represents 120,000 college teachers in the United Kingdom, passed “Resolution 30: Boycott of Israeli academic institutions,” responding to a call from Palestinian trade unions to boycott all Israeli academic institutions and calling on the leadership of the UCU to “circulate the full text of the Palestinian boycott call to all branches . . . [and to] encourage members to consider the moral implications of existing and proposed links with Israeli academic institutions” as part of a resolution that “condemns the complicity of Israeli academia in the occupation”; and

Whereas, the national affiliates of the Professional Staff Congress/CUNY—the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the American Association of University Professors (AAUP)—have both issued statements opposing the planned UCU boycott; and

Whereas, the question of a boycott of Israeli academic institutions is of such importance to our membership and to the larger public whom our members serve that the PSC should not remain silent on the issue, even when our national affiliates have spoken; and

Whereas, among PSC members there is a spectrum of deeply-held and sometimes conflicting positions on the issue of Israel’s expansion into the post-1967 territories and of the role of the United States in supporting Israel’s foreign policy; and

Whereas, the timing of the UCU resolution and the urgency of responding does not allow the PSC to engage in the kind of broad-based, CUNY-wide discussion such a complex issue deserves—the kind that preceded and enabled the Delegate Assembly vote in 2003 on the US expansion of war into Iraq; and

Whereas, the PSC categorically opposes anti-Semitism, as it opposes all forms of racial, religious, ethnic, gender and other oppression; and

Whereas, the PSC vigorously supports academic freedom and defends the free and open exchange of ideas among scholars—the lifeblood of academic work; and

Whereas, the PSC recognizes the essential role of communication and collaboration among scholars in fostering both knowledge and justice, especially where political differences exist; and

Whereas, although boycotts have been employed historically to create political change by both the labor movement and some of the most profound movements for freedom and civil rights, a boycott of academic institutions impinges on precisely the free exchange of ideas that is essential for economic and social justice; and

Whereas, given the PSC's deep adherence to the principle of academic freedom and to the value of scholarly communication, the union cannot consider supporting or remaining neutral on the issue of an academic boycott in the absence of overwhelming evidence that such a position is the will of our membership; therefore be it

Resolved, that the Professional Staff Congress/CUNY call on the members of the UCU, who will have a year to consider the proposed boycott, to reject the proposal; and that the PSC communicate this position to our members and affiliates.