



September 2014 Issue 2
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RETIREES NEWSLETTER

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

I. OCTOBER CHAPTER

MEETING. Our next monthly meeting will be on Monday, October 6, at 1:00 PM in the PSC Union Hall, 16th floor, 61 Broadway.

We are convening a panel on **“What’s Next: An Environmental Agenda In The Aftermath Of The People’s Climate March.”** Several dozen retirees marched with hundreds of PSC members in the massive People’s Climate march on Sunday, September 21. Given the momentum generated by the march, we’ll explore issues and actions for focus by the PSC and the CUNY community.

SPEAKERS: **Kenneth Gould**, Director, Urban Sustainability Program and Professor of Sociology, Brooklyn College/CUNY Graduate Center; **Jean Grassman**, Co-coordinator, PSC Environmental Health and Safety Watchdogs and Associate Professor, Health and Nutrition Sciences, Brooklyn College; and **Eric Weltman**, Senior Organizer, Food and Water Watch.

Light refreshments will be served.

The chapter Executive Committee will meet at 61 Broadway from 10:30 AM - 12:00 PM in the Justice Room on the 15th floor. Anyone interested is invited to attend.



**II. PLEASE SUBMIT YOUR
QUESTIONS FOR LARRY
MORGAN IN ADVANCE OF THE**

NOVEMBER MEETING. At the November 3 session, our guest speaker will be Dr. Oliver Fein, president of Physicians for a National Health Program. He will speak on “The Prospects and Pitfalls for Single Payer Health Care.”

At that meeting we will also have Larry Morgan, executive director of the PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund, who will address current issues related to the Welfare Fund. Your part in this equation is to provide general policy questions, which he’ll be glad to answer. Private issues may be handled in individual consultations. We would like to receive your Welfare Fund-related questions in advance. Please send them to this newsletter’s editor at: <mailto:jjudd18@optonline.net>.

III. REPORT ON THE SEPTEMBER CHAPTER MEETING. *The following summary was provided by Joel Berger, the Chapter’s Vice-Chairman.*

Asserting An Agenda For This Year While Reflecting On The Past Year: In her annual State of the Union Address to the Retirees Chapter, Barbara Bowen, president of the PSC, began by recalling her address at the chapter’s first meeting last year. On that occasion, she reported on the continuing effort to include adjunct faculty in the New York City health insurance program. Now, after a 14-year struggle, CUNY has taken responsibility for providing eligible adjuncts with health insurance coverage through the City’s Health Benefits Program. The change took effect October 1, 2014,

for eligible adjuncts who had completed enrollment forms for coverage under the plan.

Barbara reminded the chapter, “That is not just an adjunct issue. That is a retiree issue because we are all in the same Welfare Fund together. The fiscal health of the Welfare Fund depended, in part, on getting that problem solved.” Persistent efforts by the PSC and its membership – especially the September 2011 demonstration at Baruch, outside a meeting of the Board of Trustees – succeeded in bringing CUNY, the City, the State, and the union together to achieve “stable health insurance for adjuncts and newfound stability for the Welfare Fund,” Barbara said. “That’s one big thing done this year,” she added. “We’ve also made progress on the contract.”



The September Clarion focused on the contract negotiations.

All 152 city labor contracts had expired when Mayor de Blasio took office. Mayor Bloomberg’s hard line

against raises was totally unacceptable to the unions. Today, many contracts have been settled. "Now there is momentum to get more settled," Barbara reported, and the PSC has been engaged in intense talks with CUNY management.

A vital concern of retirees is payments to the Welfare Fund. The parity of benefits to both active and retired faculty is something "we have fought very hard for" over the years, Barbara asserted. There is no money offer on the table at this time, but the PSC is fighting for both increases in salary and full retroactivity.

Last year's meeting came on the eve of the Democratic Party primary election for mayor, and Barbara reminded the chapter that the PSC was the first public-sector union to endorse de Blasio, and one of the few to endorse him in the primary. "The PSC was there right at the beginning," she said. "We endorsed de Blasio because he took a stand on inequality, because he built a campaign around reducing inequity in the city, because he stood against 'Stop and Frisk,' because he stood for universal pre-K." In this year's Democratic Party primary election for governor, Barbara noted that both NYSUT and the NY State AFL-CIO made no endorsement of any candidate.

After last year's elections brought de Blasio to office, the new mayor included more funds in his budget for CUNY. The \$20 million dollar increase "is not transformative – but

it is in the direction of addition, rather than subtraction," Barbara said.

The fight on Pathways continues with the new CUNY Chancellor James B. Milliken. "We are going to continue to pressure him," Barbara declared. "It is the critical issue about faculty governance, and our knowledge, our ability to offer something to our students, our concern for the quality of education they receive." She emphasized that the Pathways fight from last year continues into this year.



In May 2013, 92% of CUNY faculty voted "no confidence" in Pathways.

The PSC is still engaged in a struggle over teacher education, with the State changing the process of teacher certification to one that relies on a single high-stakes test. A high charge to each student (\$300) must be paid to a for-profit company, Pearson, before they will assess a video of the student's teaching (which is part of the new process). The PSC and NYSUT won a two-

year moratorium on full implementation of this new high-stakes process, and the PSC is on a Task Force with the State Education Commissioner to examine the process of assessment.

An internal PSC project for the coming year will be to compile an oral history of the PSC and its early leaders. Barbara recognized the Chapter's efforts saying, "Retirees have historically been incredible--not just good, and not just reliable--but incredible in fighting for the contract. And I think we will have to call on you again."

The PSC needs to build its own agenda, she emphasized, and not just react to all the pressures put upon the union. Asserting an agenda building on what we have achieved politically in taking CUNY "out of the poverty mindset" is a continuing goal of the union. A top priority this fall is "to push and push to get funding for the contract."

The PSC will complete its study on race and CUNY this year, and will be a major voice in protecting higher education from privatization. Barbara concluded her address by emphasizing that the CUNY system must be changed in a transformational way, with a major infusion of funds.

With these ambitious goals, the PSC continues to build its own power and strives to strengthen the progressive labor movement in the City, with an eye towards expanding labor's scope and influence. We are seeing that with the People's Climate March and

with efforts to organize the unorganized in new ways, i.e., fast food workers. Barbara said she looks forward to hearing the ideas of retirees as the union promotes its agenda.

IV. LABOR GOES TO THE MOVIES. *Godzilla/Gojira, Friday, October 17, 6 PM, PSC Union Hall.*



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. The threat of global climate change has given apocalyptic scenarios more mainstream girth, but filmmakers have been documenting and imagining man-made end times for years. The featured films depict nuclear confrontation, resource wars, tampering with ecological balance, or nature's metaphysical revenge. They are meant to stimulate discussion about options for future actions.

Godzilla/Gojira (1954, Japan, Ishiro Honda): Born from the general atmosphere of dread and anxiety with which 1950s Japan viewed atomic weapons, Toho Studios' Godzilla spawned an entire genre of daikaiju ("giant strange beast") films, as well as endless

sequels, spinoffs and remakes. But no subsequent films have approached the incredible staying power of the original; this incarnation of Godzilla may be just a man in a rubber suit, but his relevancy and impact on pop culture are undiminished even today. An ancient beast stirred from its underwater lair by atom bomb tests, Godzilla embodies the double threat of humanity's nuclear aggression and the resultant rage of the natural world. For J. Hoberman, "As crass as it is visionary, Godzilla belongs with—and might well trump—the art films *Hiroshima Mon Amour* and *Dr. Strangelove* as a daring attempt to fashion a terrible poetry from the mind-melting horror of atomic warfare."

Doors open at 6 p.m. A discussion will follow the film. Light refreshments provided.