



October 2012 Issue 2
Academic Year 2012-2013

Retirees Newsletter

Professional Staff Congress
Jack Judd, Editor

I. Next Chapter Meeting, Monday, November 5th (note the change in location). The next meeting of the Retirees Chapter of the PSC will be held on Monday, November 5 at the CUNY Center for Worker Education, 25 Broadway, 7th floor, in rooms 752-753 from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. We're meeting in a new location this month because the audio-video equipment in the union hall is being updated. Photo ID may be necessary to enter the building.

This month our program will feature PSC Pension & Health Benefits Coordinator Jared Herst speaking about pension and Welfare Fund benefits and a panel presentation on the Social Safety Net.

The Executive Committee of the Retirees Chapter will meet at the PSC offices, 61 Broadway, in the 14th floor conference room at 10:30 a.m. Anyone interested is invited to attend.

Address any comments and items for future newsletters to jjudd18@optonline.net

II. Dues Reminder. Reminder notices have been mailed to PSC retirees who

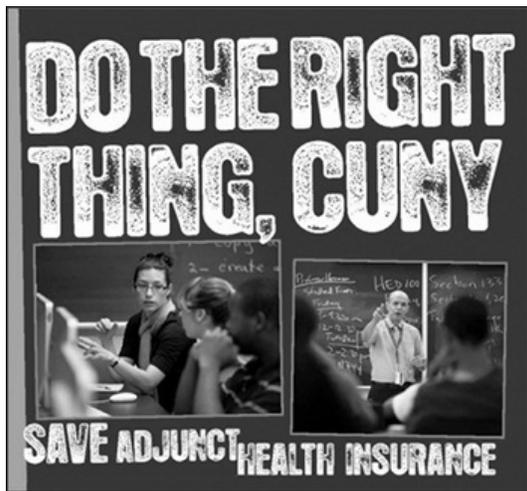


have not paid their annual dues for the period 9/1/12-8/31/13. If you have mailed in your \$71 dues check, and have received a reminder notice, please disregard it. If you are not sure if you have paid your annual dues, please call the PSC Membership Department at 212-354-1252 to ascertain your status. If you have not sent in your check, please do so as soon as possible to ensure a continuation of your PSC membership.

III. Summary of Sept. Chapter Meeting. As is his wont, Vice-Chair Joel Berger has prepared the following two summaries of remarks made at the October meeting by PSC President Barbara Bowen and former Executive Director of the Municipal Labor Council Ed Ott.

ADJUNCT HEALTH CARE VICTORY AND CONTINUING CHALLENGES SHAPE THE NEW ACADEMIC YEAR

President Barbara Bowen began her annual “State of the Union” address to the chapter by stating that PSC and CUNY have developed a proposal for providing sustainable funding of coverage for eligible adjuncts through an existing public-employee health plan. The appropriate public agencies are currently reviewing the proposal. The Welfare Trustees have extended the current adjunct health insurance benefit until October 31, 2012 to allow time to finalize the agreement.



As the Fall 2011 PSC poster implored, CUNY has “done the right thing.”

She also described how the Affordable Healthcare Act affects the Welfare Fund, and explained that prescription drug costs are a large part of fund expenses.

Barbara noted that our in-service brothers and sisters have been working without a contract for two years. There has been no economic offer from CUNY. Whether to demand an offer at this current time is being assessed by the

bargaining committee. The offer we receive is influenced by the economics of the contracts settled by the City and State. Two of the largest public employee unions in the state agreed to offers that included salary rate increases of zero, zero, zero and two percent. Those contracts also contained unpaid furloughs and increased employee contributions to health care. The PSC rejects the notion that such economic austerity is the only possibility. Meanwhile, however, the PSC and CUNY have made progress in informal talks on several issues.

"While all of that is going on—and we have plenty to struggle with CUNY about—along comes Pathways, CUNY managements’ plan to change the general education curriculum," she said. The Pathways framework was passed by the CUNY Trustees in June, 2011, over the objections of the PSC and the Faculty Senate. Since then, over 100 resolutions opposing Pathways have been passed by faculty groups. Connecting the Pathways struggle with the Chicago teacher’s strike and their opposition to standardized teaching through testing, Barbara said, "We are fighting for the soul of public higher education." She continued by pointing out that "Pathways is not unique to CUNY; it is part of an agenda to change higher education. Even the name “Pathways” is not original. It appears in documents from the Lumina Foundation, whose endowment comes from profits from the student loan industry." CUNY’s primary focus is a streamlined curriculum, not a better transfer process.

Barbara outlined the arguments contained in the joint PSC and Faculty Senate lawsuits opposing Pathways, and described the actions faculty are taking on campus to repeal and replace Pathways. When the English department faculty at Queensborough Community College voted not to reduce the number of credit hours of their basic Composition course from four credit hours to three hours, their provost threatened the non-reappointment of all adjuncts in the department and called into question the reappointment of the department's untenured full-time faculty. Barbara will continue to lead the PSC in opposition to a "rationed, austerity education for the students we teach." The union will also vigorously push back against efforts to "break faculty governance."

WORKING PEOPLE FACE MOST IMPORTANT ELECTION IN DECADES

Ed Ott, former executive director of the Municipal Labor Council, and now distinguished lecturer in CUNY, has followed election campaigns ever since he was ten years old. He believes, "This particular election, for working people, is the most important in my lifetime—and probably the most important since the congressional elections after Roosevelt was first elected." Expanding on that theme, Ed reviewed the progress that working people have achieved through their unions since the New Deal and the recent setbacks in various states around the country. He described the effort to isolate public employees, and stated, "Losing this election—the implications will be clear—things like collective bargaining

could get knocked back, not only in the public sector, but also in the private sector. The experience in Wisconsin is a "dress rehearsal for what goes forward, if we lose this election." Organized labor is fully engaged in this election, but must overcome efforts to suppress the vote. Labor also has to counteract massive amounts of opposition PAC money. Union strength may be decisive in reelecting Obama.



However, Ed observes, "What is not clear, at all, is what happens if we win." Obama may continue to be President, but the House will probably remain under Republican control, and the Senate has a 50-50 chance of staying in Democratic hands. So "this thrust to dismantle everything that we built will continue." The position of unions must evolve from a defensive stand of protecting "what we have," to a vigorous pursuit of "what we want." The Democrats have practiced "aggressive indifference" since Jimmy Carter, with many legislative efforts failing for lack of Democratic leadership. Now some Democrats are putting Social Security and Medicare on the table. "We have to get tougher. Labor has to become more

of an interest group—interested in basic democratic rights." If we win this election, "we have to define that victory with a massive movement that is clear about what it wants, clear about how it wants to get there, and clear about what it is willing to sacrifice in order to do it."

IV. Articles of Interest. The Newsletter will include pertinent articles, from time to time, that concern our vital interests. This month, we feature an article by Kay Tillow on the future of Social Security and Medicare, and a piece by Patricia Barry that describes how patients are being charged thousands of dollars in medical bills because hospitals have increasingly classified Medicare beneficiaries as observation patients instead of admitting them.

- Tillow, Kay, "Post-election deficit deal threatens Medicare and Social Security: The solution is Improved Medicare for All," at <http://tinyurl.com/bq9zrn3>
- Barry, Patricia, "Being Observed. It Can Cost You Plenty," *AARP Bulletin*, October 2012, at <http://tinyurl.com/9h4txdd>

If you care to comment on this or other articles, contact the editor.

**V. Labor Goes to the Movies Presents
*Bab El-Oued City***

PSC's Labor Goes to the Movies film series explores the theme of Contesting Islamophobia with a Friday, November 9 screening of *Bab El-Oued City* (Allouache, 1994) at the CUNY Center for Worker Education, 25 Broadway, 7th

floor. The award-winning film relates the story of a young man, Boualem, in the Bab el-Oued neighborhood of Algiers, shortly after riots in 1988. Boualem cannot sleep as a mosque's nearby loudspeaker crackles with admonitions, and he ultimately hurls the equipment into the sea. Local defenders of the faith seek to enforce strict observance in the neighborhood, and close in on the miscreant who dared to silence the message of the mosque.



Light food and drink provided. \$2 donation suggested. The movie starts at 6:00 pm. For more information, go to: psc-cuny.org/calendar/labor-goes-movies-bab-el-oued-city