

The

PERALTA TEACHER

Peralta Federation of Teachers, CFT, AFL-CIO – Democracy in Education

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February 6, 2009

vol. 51 no. 3

From the President



Greetings Faculty

Perhaps there will be a state budget when you read this letter, but as I write, none has been passed. We should maintain an active presence and vigorously advocate for our needs during this time of limited resources. I urge you to attend the CFT (California Federation of Teachers) sponsored march in Sacramento on Monday, March 16. The march is designed to highlight the needs of community colleges and other higher education institutions. Please ask your students to come walk with the faculty and other employees of the community colleges as we make our voices heard arguing for well-funded higher education. While working on Prop 92 (the community college initiative) last year, we were able to forge relationships with legislators and make many communities aware of the educational opportunities a community college gives to a diverse group of students. Hopefully many of those people will become our allies now when we ask that our college budgets not be slashed.

During this recent economic downturn, the PFT leadership has been advocating for maintaining sections and questioning the use of “productivity” (or in other words- more students per teacher) as the primary guide to determining whether to keep a section open. We have suggested trimming

PFT

SPRING UNION CALENDAR:

General Membership Meetings:

March 19th 3:30 - 5:00 pm, Laney A-266

May 6th 3:00-5:00 pm, Laney A-266

Executive Council Meetings:

1st and 3rd Thursdays, 3:-5:00pm (next up - Feb 19) at the PFT office, 500 E. 8th St. (corner of 5th Ave /8th St)

CFT Convention, Sacramento, March 20-22, 2009

Community Colleges Call to Action:



1/30/2009 (from left to right): Jonathan Lightman (FACCC, E.D.)
Assembly member Sandre Swanson, and Debra Weintraub (PFT Pres.)

SAVE the DATE -- March 16th -- State Budget Protest in Sacramento (10:- 2:00 pm). It's time to go by bus, train or car and oppose the proposed cuts & fee increases. Call the PFT to sign up and/or to get info.

back in areas that do not directly impact student's access to their classroom education. We have spoken about the need to keep our outstanding part time faculty and pointed out that closing sections not only results in the loss of jobs for our part time faculty (who may go to other colleges and not return), but we also lose students to other districts that manage to keep their section offerings plentiful.

This spring, we did not suffer as severe cuts as we had feared, but it remains very important that our evaluations for the part time faculty priority re-hire pool be completed. Though Ed. Code calls for all first year faculty to be evaluated, it also states that ALL faculty are to be evaluated every three years excluding faculty currently in the tenure review process. So, our part timers who have been here for over six (6) semesters must be evaluated if we are to comply with Ed. Code regulations as well as our own contract.

All full time faculty can be asked to do up to three faculty evaluations per year in addition to tenure review. It is crucial that the evaluations are completed now. I am asking that all full time faculty step up and do their part in this evaluation process, even though many of you are already contributing in numerous ways to your college and to the District. In a time when some districts are asking their full time faculty to limit their extra service or in some way limit the spending or benefits to faculty in order to help part time faculty, I feel what the PFT is asking from the faculty is minimal. Please give a few hours of your time to do an evaluation. Our educational institution is strengthened by evaluations and we are also helping the most vulnerable members of our teaching community.

Part time faculty are also eligible to be evaluators. Hopefully our streamlined evaluation process will be in place this semester; once agreed upon, a \$60.00 stipend per evaluation will be given to part time faculty evaluators and to every full time faculty that complete more than three evaluations.

I want to stress that many of our part time faculty are well-seasoned instructors and would be

excellent evaluators. I believe and trust in the integrity of part time faculty to do as fair and honest evaluation as any full time member would do. Their participation in the process will relieve the burden on full time faculty to complete the required amount of evaluations in a semester.

Because there is/was so much uncertainty regarding the future budget for community colleges, the District asked the PFT to agree to a one year extension of our current contract. The PFT agreed so as to maintain all the benefits and wages we currently have and we would not risk losing anything during this unstable economy. As many of you have noticed, we have to date not received a COLA this year. If there is a state COLA reinstated in the budget, we will receive it retroactive to July. We will also get parity pay for part time faculty if it is a line item in the Governor's budget. In the meantime, the District agreed to maintain the 50-50 health benefits plan and office hours for part time faculty whether or not the state funds it in the final budget.

We want to continue working with faculty to develop and hone issues for a time when our contract will be opened for negotiations. We continue to talk with the District about parity for part time faculty, improved retiree health benefits for post 2004 contract hires and ways to decrease our current workload including pressing for more full time hires. We will be working on small (but significant) non- money item ways to enhance our contract over this year.

In this time of great need, but with a new born sense of hope and cooperation, I am looking forward to working with all of you. We should listen to each other and believe that we can make progress together. We all can be a part of change for the better. In that spirit, I am hoping to come to each college at least once a month to be available to hear your concerns, keep the lines of communication open and begin strengthening your relationship with the union and the union's relationship with you.

In Unity,
Debby Weintraub

Part-time Faculty News & Updates

by Cynthia Mahabir – PFT Part-time Representative

The times are stubbornly uncertain for many of us, but new winds are blowing. Like millions of others, my heart fluttered with our new President's invitation to remember our old-fashioned values of human generosity and reciprocity, evident in "the kindness to take in a stranger when the levees break, the selflessness of workers who would rather cut their hours than see a friend lose their job which sees us through our darkest hours."

We await brighter days ahead as we continue our efforts for a measure of job security and parity. The PT faculty parity meetings we convened last fall on the four campuses were lively as we explored various ideas for achieving parity. I am grateful to all the PT faculty members who attended and participated in these sessions. We expect to work further on these ideas this semester. Look for e-mail announcements.

On January 13, 2009, I presented to the Board of Trustees an abbreviated version of the results of the Spring 2008 PT Faculty Survey. At the end, trustees inquired about a number of PT issues such as faculty diversity, office hour compensation, access to office space for meeting with students, and PT rehire pool evaluations. My thanks to the ten PT faculty members who attended the meeting, and to Eileen Levin for strongly advocating in her public comment for job security for PT faculty. The full version of the PT '08 survey results can be viewed at the PFT's website: www.pft1603.org. Take a look and let me know what you think.

The 2009 CFT convention will be held at the Sheraton Grand in Sacramento on March 20-22, 2009. Among the PFT's delegates to last year's convention in Oakland were eight PT faculty members. So be sure to submit your 2009 delegate election ballot by the stated deadline. (For info. on the convention, visit www.pft1603.org and click on the CFT Convention link.)

Also, remember that February 9, 2009 is the deadline for enrolling/re-enrolling for the 50/50

medical plan (contact Jennifer Siebert at 587-7838), and if you are a new PT faculty member (this is your first year) or you are eligible for an evaluation for the PT rehire pool (6-10 semesters of employment in your department), check promptly with your department chair about scheduling your evaluation. Be sure to check the Spring '09 revisions of the PT evaluation procedure and forms at www.pft1603.org or call 763-8820.

Do stay in touch (cmlaney2003@yahoo.com or 464-3185).

Faculty Voices: Your letters & emails

Dear Colleagues & *Peralta Teacher* Editors:

Rahm Emmanuel, Obama's Chief of Staff, observed recently that a crisis is too important to waste, a sentiment I share. The looming budget cuts qualify as a crisis, and provide an opportunity to fundamentally affect the current pay negotiations.

I teach accounting, and try to focus on good business practices. Here, the focus should be to pay us now what we deserve. A recent newsletter included a comment that effective teachers should earn \$100k. I agree, but the key word is "effective". We are not in this for the money, and I do not mean to denigrate the dedication of my fellow teachers, but there is little connection between effort, or rather performance, and rewards under the current system of compensation. While it is difficult to develop a performance-based compensation programs in education, the current system relying entirely on seniority and credentials has only a remote connection to effectiveness, in my view, as measured by student learning outcomes. It also provides virtually no meaningful incentives to perform, for good or ill.

I also believe we should be paid now or currently for our contributions. Unlike many private sector jobs, a big chunk of teacher compensation is deferred. This locks people in, forcing them to either stay in their positions and forego other opportunities, or walk away and give up the fruits of their labors. One gross example of this is tenure, and I recommend it be phased out.

Next, and related, is a flexible benefit program. The current program is so limited and inflexible as to have no value to me, apart from the modest amount going into the STRS program. It would be better to either acknowledge that we receive no benefits apart from salary, and boost pay rates, or modify benefits so it is more broadly received. For example, provide a program similar to Section 125 or so-called cafeteria plans which are common in the private sector, offering alternatives for health insurance, commute costs, child-care, vacation, etc., that is not one-size-fits-all. (There is a modest but manageable administrative effort required. The savings in payroll taxes will more than offset the costs; as an accountant I know these things.)

Taking a proactive approach and proposing alternatives in the negotiating process can work to our advantage. It seems that we are focusing on merely trying to hold the line against cuts, and thus wasting a perfectly good crisis. I get the impression that we are perceived less as dedicated public servants striving to educating the youth, and those not so young, but seen more as grasping bureaucrats unwilling to accept responsibility and be accountable for results. But that's an accountant for you.

Peter Freeman
Business Dept., Merritt College

Fired up...Ready to go!

I've been reading Naomi Klein's book The Shock Doctrine. On election night, after Barack Obama was declared our next president, after I wept for shock and joy, I sat down to read and found myself thinking "do I really need to read this anymore? Can things really be this bad with what's just been done by Americans?" It was like one of those flying dreams that are so real, that when I wake up it takes a few minutes to believe I can't actually fly.

No, the world Klein describes is still here in full force. The world we face is in full force, and will be so after Obama's first 100 days as well. Millions of people will still be foreclosed and evicted from their homes and the economy will continue to fail because the failure is at its roots.

But there is something different, and it is not to be ignored. Yes, the Obama campaign helped the American people turn an historic corner, but it did something even more important. The messages of the campaign, "Yes, we can" and "the Audacity of Hope" brought huge numbers of Americans into political activity, and gave us permission to expect true justice.

The instruction that he would need us pushing his administration gives us permission to do what we really must do now. We must push together (not ask), and push hard for what we truly need. The corporate elite are already organized, already pushing, already on a "war" footing. Today is the end of the politics of begging, and we must turn every organizational resource we have toward this task.

As an environmental scientist (interviewed on KQED) once said, "All good leaders are led from below." Whether Obama is a closet hero, a prophet, or just the latest really smart guy trying to save Capitalism for the elites, the answer for us is the same. Get educated, get organized, get a vision of what we want, get going. If he actually speaks up for the broke and the near-broke, and there is no movement behind him pushing, he'll be destroyed; we all know that, we've had leaders taken from us before. If he's just another system-saver, well, we'd better be pushing for ourselves, educating millions of leaders.

We need an end to poverty worldwide, not a reduction.

Poverty today is purely a corporate construct. Humanity did not come down these many centuries to end here in ignominy and human-wrought disaster. We do not create society so that a few may prosper by causing so many such pain. We create society to let us accomplish together that which we can't do individually. I need you. You need me. We grow by helping each other. That is not naiveté, it is a decision; our lives will be governed by either fear or trust. We will build our new world on the foundation of our trust and care for each other. In a global economy, we gain nothing by competing with each other, or with people of other countries, for what we all need together.

We need an end to war, not to this or that war, but to war itself.

But to end war, we first need leaders brave enough to speak the truth that the War on Terror is a lie. We need President Obama to speak the truth that the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and everywhere else are wars for the petty obsessions of corporate power and obscene wealth. Tell us the truth; that's where it starts. All modern wars are fought, not for hate, religion or anger, but for money, power and control. Those who refuse to speak even that truth are not leaders for the American people in this age.

We need an end to the destruction of the planet's climates. Not just a slowing down, but a complete transformation; not what fits into the corporate budget, but a massive, energizing campaign to eliminate energy wasted on everything dictated by a corporate economy based on greed, cheating and mistrust; making the money, investing the money, guarding the money, fighting over the money, keeping people from getting what they need just because they don't have the money.

We need massive mobilizations to rebuild rainforests, to filter and clean up the Pacific Vortex (the Texas-sized floating islands of plastic bits), to transform our entire food economy away from depletion of land and ocean resources, to rebuild the economies and ecologies of the many nations ravaged to the point of disintegration by Disaster Capitalism.

We need everything else: freedom of access for all to housing, health care, education, infrastructure, everything we have a society for, and they should belong to us, the public. Those who ask "do you want the government between you and your doctor?" advocate having a corporation between you and your doctor. To have these things be in doubt is as absurd as privatizing air. They'll probably do that next.

And we need to work. Everybody wants to work, wants to contribute what they can. But capital can only let us work if it makes them rich; if our work doesn't make the rich richer, we can't work. And now that automation (which has made them richer) is so big we don't earn enough to buy what's made, they'll shut down the factories and sell off the

machines for scrap rather than give away for free that which was made without labor.

In the words of Dr. King, "And so this social revolution taking place can be summarized in three little words. They are not big words. One does not need an extensive vocabulary to understand them. They are the words "all," "here," and "now." We want all of our rights, we want them here, and we want them now."

In a world that truly offers abundance and the possibility of a decent, sustainable life for all humans, can we settle for anything less? If the corporate market system cannot allow us to fulfill these needs, let us be done with it. It's only one way of doing things. We start pushing, together, now. Fired up? Ready to go!

Peter Brown
Machine Technology Dept., Laney College

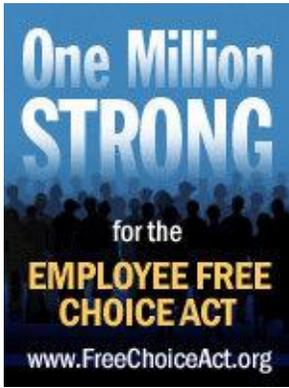
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(If you would like to submit a letter to the PFT editor, email sara@pft1603.org. Please limit your letters & invites to 225 words or less & save them as Word documents, with a .doc file extension)

Perusing Faculty Doors



by Kono Packi (perused by Karin Hart, Laney College)



The current labor law system in the United States is broken, with the result that working people are routinely denied the freedom to unite with their co-workers and bargain for better wages, benefits and working conditions. Especially in the private sector, corporations regularly intimidate workers--including firing union organizers--to keep out unions, and there is little recourse for workers under the law.

Figures from the AFL-CIO indicate that these problems are widespread. Employees are fired in one-fourth of private-sector union organizing campaigns. When there is a campaign, more than three-quarters of employers require supervisors to deliver anti-union messages to the workers they supervise. Workers who manage to successfully organize, despite the obstacles, aren't even able to get a contract one-third of the time. Among AFT members, nurses and healthcare workers in particular have faced massive and expensive anti-union campaigns.

The most promising approach to leveling the playing field between workers and employers is to reform the labor law system, which is exactly what the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA) would do.

EFCA would do three main things:

- 1) Establish a system of majority sign-up to certify a union. That means if a majority of employees in a unit sign union authorization cards, the employer must recognize the union as the workers' bargaining representative.

- 2) Strengthen penalties against employers who illegally coerce or intimidate employees attempting to form a union.
- 3) Bring in a neutral third party to settle a contract between a company and a newly certified union if the parties aren't able to agree in the first 90 days.

"Millions of working Americans want to form a union for a voice on the job, and for wages and benefits that can support a family," says AFT president Edward J. McElroy. "EFCA would help ensure that workers have the right to bargain for a better life. By allowing more workers to choose the advantages of having a union, EFCA also will help strengthen America's middle class, which today finds itself caught between stagnant paychecks and soaring living costs."

If you would like to get more involved in this union issue, call PFT & sign your name to the petition at AFT's site, <http://www.freechoiceact.org/page/s/aft>



We are looking for more photos and cartoons that capture our interests, as faculty, or simply cause a laugh or smile.

Send a photo, cartoon, invite or letter to the *Peralta Teacher* editor, sara@pft1603.org; we will include it in the next edition.

Send us your salubrious suggestions on strengthening our contract, our union and our community.

"Yes, I will!"