



HEARTLAND



A Newsletter for Region 8
Public Employees' Federation
"The HEART of PEF"
BOX 12414, ALBANY, NY 12212-2414

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DUES INCREASE PASSED BY CONVENTION

Amid controversy, confusion and acrimony, delegates to PEF's annual convention, held in Syracuse from September 11 -13, passed the dues increase fervently sought by President Benson and his administration.

The controversy began when the Benson administration announced their intention to raise dues, increasing the rate from .8% to .9% of gross salary and raising the cap from \$600 to \$900 annually, in July, only 2 months before the September 11th convention. Some charged Benson had planned to raise dues as early as March and waited for PEF's election to be past before making the announcement. There were accusations that the announcement was timed to allow little time for opposition to organize.

The campaign by the administration and those opposed to the dues increase began in earnest with petitions circulated to protest the dues increase. PEF sent out mailings claiming that "right wing and corporate interests" were working to stop the dues increase. They were portrayed as sharks attacking PEF members. These "interests" were never identified nor was any support for these assertions forthcoming. Booklets touting the benefits of the dues increase were circulated at the convention.

The confusion began at the convention, when an additional plenary session was scheduled the first day and the dues increase discussed that day instead of on Tuesday as originally planned. During the debate, Region 8 coordinator
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WE MUST WORK TOGETHER TO CONTINUE OUR SUCCESS

We have worked together to achieve unheard of legislative gains, job security, pension reforms, and the best contract we have had in over a decade. These successes took a united PEF membership working toward a common goal, as well as the resources to fund our mobilization efforts that achieved those gains.

At PEF's annual convention two months ago, delegates overwhelmingly approved a modest dues increase, and with that vote chose to continue to build our strength and move forward in our ability to represent you. After purposeful debate, the delegates made a strong statement that they understood what it takes to continue to succeed and to continue to build our strength.

Pursuing a dues increase was a very difficult decision, a decision that was not made without a full exploration of all options, and serious consideration of the potential consequences.

We have been able to hold the line on expenses without imperiling PEF's ability effectively represent you, however, our international affiliates also seeking to build their strength, last spring imposed a significant increase in our member assessments.

If PEF tried to absorb these increases in assessments without a dues increase we would have gained increased political influence through our international affiliates at the federal level, but weakened ourselves and our ability to influence contract negotiations
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Petitions are now circulating to fill the office of PEF Vice President left vacant by the untimely death of Jean DeBow.

At least 4 candidates are known to be actively seeking the office: Pat Baker, Region 11 coordinator, running on the Members First slate of President Benson, Dee Dobson, nurse at Stony Brook Medical Center, Ruth Gaines, Region 12 coordinator and Barry Rachnowitz, Executive Board member from Brooklyn.

Petitions must contain at least 5,287 valid signatures and be returned to PEF no later than November 9, 2000. If needed, ballots will be mailed on November 20, 2000 and must be returned by December 11, 2000. The winner of the election will serve the remainder of the term ending July 31, 2003.

COORDINATOR'S CORNER

LEADERSHIP BY EXAMPLE

By Jeff Satz

I was watching this summer's political conventions and found them bereft of inspiration. These were staged media events calculated to make various constituencies feel good. In my zeal for inspiration, I went to a collection of tapes in hopes of being beckoned to sunlit uplands.

One tape had an anthology of Mario Cuomo's bon mots. I'm not one of the former Governor's admirers. His words might inspire some, but those in a position to know would point to hypocrisy, meanness, and a vindictive streak. Towards the final years of Mario's tenure, any humility the man possessed had given way to a virulent strain of megalomania.

Still, the man managed to turn on the multitudes and I felt that with the perspective of hindsight, he might provide the inspiration that could not come from Gore or Bush. Those worthies may have some good qualities, but cannot lead a flock of homing pigeons. As I was listening to Cuomo's rather flatulent rhetoric, a phrase that he uttered in the context of lecturing we common folk on the virtues of affirmative action caused me to pause. Mario called affirmative action "simple justice". It didn't matter that Cuomo never defined what he meant by affirmative action. Was the "simple justice" of which he spoke the more conventional definition of increasing outreach, education, and training to ensure that "protected classes" would have a chance to grasp the rope of opportunity? This concept would have widespread support and might even inspire me. Was Cuomo really seeking to ensure statistical results based on quotas and set asides? He would then have to risk offending all those who might lose their own "equal opportunity protection" based on merit, if a quota system were used to apportion goodies on the basis of race, gender, religion, sexual preference, etc. Those of us who survived the Cuomo years might assume a Cuomoite preference for the quota approach. He was always contriving to weaken the civil service system in favor of raw political patronage and uninhibited pandering to various interest groups.

We can never be totally sure as Cuomo was astute enough politically to enshroud his real intentions

in a rhetorical fog. Suddenly, I sensed an opportunity for Mario Cuomo to move toward clarifying himself by an example. Only thus might I be truly inspired.

As most are aware, Cuomo's son Andrew is preparing to step to the plate and become his Dad's political heir. Young Andrew, by all accounts a "chip off the old block", is currently President Clinton's Housing Secretary, but is casting wolfish eyes at Mario's old job as New York's Governor. With New York's heavy Democratic registration and the ebb of Republican Governor Pataki's momentum, the governorship may be ripe for the picking.

Alas, life is not without its contretemps. There is in fact another serious aspirant for a four year residence in the Eagle Street Mansion. Andrew's fellow Democrat, H. Carl McCall, has been State Comptroller and is yearning to be New York's chief elected official. McCall is in his late sixties and at a peak of popularity. He doesn't have the luxury of many election cycles to achieve a dream of being New York's first African American Governor.

I realize that neither candidate has formally declared for Governor. They are, however, doing all the preliminary organizing and publicity gambits.

It's time for Papa Cuomo to enlighten his sprout about the virtues of "simple justice." Should young
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HEARTLAND

A newsletter by and for the members of Region Eight of the Public Employees' Federation, AFL-CIO

Publisher
Editor in Chief

Jeff Satz
Richard Bojman

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WORK TOGETHER - CONT'D

and political policy at the state level. To enter into negotiations, and budget fights without grassroots mobilization, without the necessary political influence, and without the ability to fight against management and if necessary other unions, would have been irresponsible leadership. To effectively maintain our influence and build the strength necessary to meet our challenges requires additional resources that could only be achieved through a dues increase.

Many of the opponents of the increase have claimed that PEF will squander the additional revenue and that it is an unfair tax on PEF members. I cannot disagree more. We have a proven record of fiscal prudence and accountability. PEF will provide an accounting for every cent of the increase to the membership and is restricted in how the increase will be used. The dues increase should be viewed as an investment, whose dividends will be better contracts, more job security, and improved retirement benefits.

Our success over the past few years didn't happen by accident, it was the result of coordinated and focused efforts by members united toward a common goal, combined with the resources necessary to be effective. It is time to put the debate about the dues increase behind us and join in moving forward to continue to improve the lives of our members.

BAUMGARTNER FINALLY RESIGNS

by Howard G. Baumgartner

The time has really, finally, definitely come for yours truly to give up the powerful, influential, love-inspiring position of Editor-in-chief, and hand the title over to the Managing Editor, Rich Bojman.

Actually, Mr. Bojman has been doing most of the work since the beginning of the year 2,000. Due to my ill-omened elective eye surgery, I haven't been able to read well enough to do the tremendous amount of fine work required to proof and assemble Heartland. For this reason, Rich has had to do the hard stuff, while I filled the relatively easy job of deciding what we should print. Gradually, I have been relinquishing even this modest function because, since Rich has been doing all of the hard work, he should get all the blame—I mean praise—for what finally appears.

Since Mr. Bojman appears to value my advice, I shall continue with Heartland in an advisory capacity. Also, I hope to contribute articles from time to time, when the spirit moves me.

EDITORIAL

On October 15, 2000, long time PEF activist C. Michael Darcy passed away after a long battle with cancer. This battle was made all the more difficult by the harassment he received at the hands of management at the Department of Education.

In his last year at work, he was disciplined for using e-mail to send the Electric Spark, the local newsletter, to his members. This was done despite the fact that management had approved this practice and it had been routine for some time. The cruelty of taking such action under those circumstances can not be overstated.

In the minds of many, it says all we need to know about management's true opinion of state workers and their needs. Let us never forget what they did to Mike in his final days.

We send our condolences to his family and friends. We know his spirit, fighting for the working men & women of PEF, will continue to be with us. Each of us, in our own small way, can make a difference. Mike did.

I want to conclude by saying that I think Rich has been doing an excellent job, and I am really glad to have found so capable a replacement. I would ask all of you to be tolerant of his mistakes (if any), and to help him out by sending in articles. Rich intends to continue the policy, established by Jeff Satz and myself, of printing articles and letters representing all points of view. As I pointed out early in my tenure "why be hated by only one faction, when one can be hated by all."

I am proud to say that the materials printed in Heartland since its inception have managed to antagonize all factions more or less equally. I am not proud of the antagonism, per se. I would prefer it if Heartland made everyone happy; and I would like the publication I founded to promote solidarity. There is, however, a higher value than solidarity. That value is an informed membership. It is my belief that Heartland is the only PEF publication in existence which fully informs its readers. It does not pander to the official PEF-Central line. It does not pander to the positions taken by various out-of-power individuals or groups.

It is my belief that it is in providing a place where all points of view may be found that Heartland has found its true niche, and made its own unique contribution. May it long continue to do so.

DUES INCREASE - CONT'D

Jeff Satz amended the main motion of the floor to limit the increase to only the elimination of the cap. Chair of the convention, President Benson, misinterpreted this amendment, stating that it would eliminate the cap in addition to increasing the dues.9%. Many delegates spoke against assuming the interpretation was correct until Satz was able to clarify the amendment.

Acrimony began when several other amendments were offered, and all were defeated in the voting. The convention moved to a vote on the main motion, the dues increase itself, but several delegates objected to this because, as required by Roberts Rules of Order, which govern all union meetings, no one had spoken in opposition to the main motion. The chair, President Benson, overruled them and proceeded to a vote. A motion for a roll call vote was defeated. The dues increase subsequently passed. The PEF constitution requires that dues increases be passed by at least a 60% vote, it is unclear how this was determined. At least one supporter of the dues increase felt that the parliamentary maneuvers alienated undecided delegates and caused them to vote in favor of the dues increase.

At the August Executive board meeting, debate was held on resolution to support the dues increase. After a lengthy and raucous debate, it passed by an 85-15 vote. Several speakers argued that the dues increase was too small. Some asked for as much as 1% of gross salary. One speaker derided a member who came to complain to him everyday by saying that each time the member came to complain, she had something from Dunkin Donuts, and that if they could afford to go to Dunkin Donuts every day, they could afford the dues increase.

DUES INCREASE HISTORY

by Howard G. Baumgartner, Division 205

At the recent PEF convention, delegates approved a small dues increase, from. 8% to.9%. The dues increase proposal passed by a large margin; but many members were upset by the increase, especially in Region Eight.

Some people have expressed an interest in learning more about the history of PEF dues increases. I hope that this article will satisfy that interest.

When I began working for New York State, in 1977, I was an employee of the Department of Mental Hygiene at Pilgrim Psychiatric Center on Long Island. I can remember people coming around, early in my tenure, to urge that we petition to form a new union. The rationale was that we were "professionals," and CSEA

was a union for non-professionals, which did not have our interests at heart during negotiations. I agreed, and signed on for what was to become PEF, confident that we would be a powerful association of professional employees who would make the Governor stand up and take notice. I was to be largely disappointed, however.

Problems began almost immediately. First, it proved to be very expensive to wage the campaign to decertify CSEA as the PS&T bargaining agent, and replace it with PEF. Our early leadership turned to the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) for advice, and financial assistance. They provided both. However, there were conditions. First, we had to agree to affiliate with those unions and pay per capita dues. Secondly, we had to repay the money we borrowed for the campaign. I don't know if anyone realized at that time that this would prove difficult or impossible to do; but, over the years, our leadership has certainly come to understand the reality of the situation.

Although we eventually gained independence from CSEA, we also wound up with an enormous debt, which prompted then AFT President Albert Shanker to remark, at our first convention, that they "owned us."

The affiliates didn't press for immediate repayment of the debt, possibly because they didn't want to kill a goose capable of laying many golden eggs. All that they insisted upon was our continued affiliation, and the consistent payment of dues to the "parent unions." It turned out that the per capita dues amounted to a fairly hefty percentage of our total dues. Arguably, the loss of funds resulting from these per capita payments, which increased from time to time, reduced our ability to provide other essential services to our members. Of course, the "parent unions" did provide us with services; but they haven't appeared to be of any great value. About the only thing of which the typical member is aware is the receipt of periodic publications from one or more of the "parent unions;" and, quite often, these periodicals are used mainly to wrap fish. Of course, much the same is true of our own newspaper, The Communicator, in spite of the fact that the Communicator has more information of immediate value to our members.

Disgruntled PEF members have often suggested that we decertify PEF as our union, and form a new union free of debt and the related slavery to the SEIU and the AFT. This is an appealing notion, but the solution isn't exactly problem-free. First, it would cost a lot of money. Where would the money come from?

Secondly, could we find another union to represent us? Most unions are affiliated with the AFL-CIO, like PEF, and AFL-CIO affiliated unions are prohibited

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LETTERS

Dues increase passes - Where is the accountability?

At the recent PEF convention the delegates passed the proposal for increasing our dues. The vast majority of delegates from Region 8 voted no on the proposal as witnessed by this delegate.

Also witnessed by this delegate was the almost blind obedience demonstrated by the delegates voting yes as amendments, consisting of valid compromises offered by Jeff Satz and others, were voted down as if with blinders on their ears.

It is very rare that one is given the opportunity to be directly accountable for ones' vote. This opportunity was presented at this convention as a delegate from Region 8, George Mata, made a motion for a roll call vote on the dues increase proposal. The motion was seconded and with that Mr. Benson made the unnecessary comment that a roll call vote would take approximately three hours. It is doubtful that this comment had any influence one way or the other as the vote to Reject a roll call vote was as overwhelming as the vote for passage of the dues increase.

As a delegate to this convention it is my hope that the delegates voting yes to the dues increase truly voted their constituent's best interest. But this was not necessary because they cannot be held accountable. These delegates when asked can merely state that they voted NO.

This reminds me of the story of a perfect game pitched in baseball before a capacity crowd of 60,000 people. Two years later, by all accounts, more than a million people stated they were there at the game. Next year if a count of all delegates stating they voted NO were to be tallied, by all accounts the proposal to increase our dues would have failed. Without accountability we will never know short of a lie detector test.

Michael Izzo
Region 8
Local 190

Health and Safety on the Move

As all of us know, state workers have always been viewed as chess pieces to be moved around according to the whims of our political leaders. This has been even more the case over the past few years.

Seemingly, more of the moves, rather than

being to existing office space, are being made to buildings that were previously abandoned or used for industrial or warehouse activities. In the days and months following the announcement of these moves, politicians talk about the supposed financial savings, managers worry about the logistics, but nobody considers the potentially serious health and safety issues – except us.

In the past couple of years, large numbers of DOH employees have been moved to Riverview (an abandoned Montgomery Ward's warehouse) in Menands, and to Hedley Park Place (a former shirt factory?) and Flanigan Square (the abandoned Standard Furniture warehouse) in Troy.

To use Flanigan Square as an example, this move involved the 350 members of the Center for Environmental Health moving from Western Avenue in Albany to River Street in Troy. Staff, led by PEF members, began discussing health and safety concerns as soon as the move was announced. We got management and CSFA to agree to participate in a health and safety committee that began meeting almost a year prior to the actual move. We felt it important to have our committee be representative of the whole building, and encouraged people to provide our committee with issues of concern. We rotated the job of taking minutes and, surprisingly, got permission to distribute those minutes on Lotus Notes to everyone in our Center. This has been a great way to keep all of our members "in the loop".

Our health and safety issues have run the gamut, from asbestos to air quality, from traffic safety to falling cinder blocks, and from building security to fire safety. Rather than give the details of each of these issues, I'd like to describe the overall approach we've taken.

As mentioned earlier, we have a diverse committee and we try to optimize input from and feedback to the rest of our co-workers. We have created a Center-wide symptom and complaint log, where all building-related problems are to be reported. Our management then reports the problem to the landlord, who then takes action (theoretically). The action/response is then entered into the log. Our intent, though, has been to try to PREVENT the conditions that would lead to health and safety problems.

Before the move, we attempted to obtain building blueprints, plans for the heating/ventilation system, and security options PRIOR to the work being completed and the building being occupied. However, even though we were meeting with the top administrators from our Center and from the Tower, we made very little progress. We were promised input into all those areas but, ultimately, the plans were never provided to us and

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the work was completed without our input. We assume that the political nature of our move contributed to this lack of forthrightness. Regardless, the result has been that a lot of this work was done shoddily, without regard to health and safety issues, and there has been a myriad of problems since taking occupancy late-June 1999.

Problems include:

1) Air quality - the air quality varies, both over time, and in different areas of the building. We have attempted, without success, to determine whether the ventilation system was tested and balanced. Therefore, building management is frequently coming over to "tweak" the system, in response to complaints;

2) Traffic Safety - because there is very limited parking on-site, most people have to walk 3 blocks to their car, crossing a very busy street. We have attempted to get the city to install a crossing light, without success (for now);

3) Handicapped Parking and Access - both building access and parking were provided with little consideration of the needs of the handicapped. The parking is sufficiently far from the building that it is unsafe on snowy days. To enter the building, a disabled person needs to rely on the assistance of co-workers or building security;

4) Fire Safety - the landlord installed an inadequate number of exit signs, and the majority of the fire doors do not meet code (e.g. gaps too large, doors don't close). Through the diligence of the committee, those problems are being rectified and there is now a written Evacuation Plan for the building. We have even been able to order evacuation chairs to facilitate the safe removal of disabled individuals from the building;

5) The Sky is Falling! - yes Chicken Little, we actually had an 18.5 pound cinder block come crashing down. Luckily, no one was hurt. Numerous other people have heard sounds of things falling on the ceiling panels above them and have reported debris on their desk. We were told the building is safe - that it is just construction debris that was left from the renovation. We continue working on this problem.

In talking to health and safety activists at other newly occupied buildings, we know that our problems are not unique. Air quality and handicapped parking seem to be the biggest issues, especially at Riverview and Hedley Park Place. We've made a lot of progress on a lot of issues, but we know there are many prob-

lems still to be solved, and it is likely that more problems will arise. We intend to maintain our inclusive, activist approach in preventing and resolving health and safety problems. We urge everybody to get involved. Form a health and safety committee for your building. Provide input and support to those people on the committee. Keep struggling for health and safety. Work shouldn't hurt!!

Matt London

Congratulations and...Sympathy

The PEF administrators were braced for a "wild conventions But there were few fireworks and in the end the administration dues proposal sailed through with a comfortable majority. Congratulations to President Benson and his team are certainly in order. President Benson skillfully managed his campaign for this revenue enhancement demonstrating in the process his mastery of the levers of Presidential power. Looking down the road, however, can President Benson and his PEF administration feel really comfortable with their rather easy victory?

My assessment of the vote for this dues proposal is that i-nanv earnest if somewhat confused delegates, decided that they should vote a trifling increase in dues because they were assured that they were building a stronger union with their vote. I don't think the campaign literature had much effect either way. My guess is that the literature on behalf of the dues proposal confused the other delegates as much as it did me.

I remember one piece produced by a mysterious "Committee for a Stronger Membership" (otherwise unidentified) that showed corporate sharks (with rather bigger teetli than any sharks I'm familiar with) and a slogan "Don't feed us to the corporate sharks'." Well, for those who still have an open mind on the subject of corporations, I'd like to point out that we in PEF have much to be grateful for. The fact is, the corporate sharks who gave us massive layoffs in the 1980's, in order to compete globally are primarily responsible for that amazing run up of stock values because of their corporations' productivity improvement. With those stock market value enhancements, has come the tax revenue from which George Pataki, despite the imprudent (maybe reckless) tax cuts he has put into effect, can pay our salary increases, and fund the justly popular changes in the pension plan for State workers. Perhaps tender sympathy is to much to ask for multimillionaire businessmen. But is it wise to be biting the]land that feeds us?

While bashing corporate sharks, the PEF administration campaign on behalf of the dues proposal
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LETTERS - CONTINUED

most delicately handled the big labor barracudas (perhaps a fish we like more than sharks) who have shown a tendency in the past to take a big clunk of our dues for services invisible to most of us. Questioned about the parent unions' appetite for per capita dues the PEF administration has conceded that we need to improve our relationship with them. I think that means we have to teach them how to share more of our contributions to them in services and benefits we need. The future looks as murky to me at this point in regard to how well we can train the parent unions to share more with us as it does in regard to how we will benefit from a big "War Chest," vague plans for a media campaign to show how PEF members help New York's citizens, and other ideas tossed off by the PEF administration for building a stronger union.

I think PEF's administration bought some time, maybe two or three years, to clarify its ideas on how to strengthen the union and help the State's professional, technical, and scientific workforce. After that, if PEF can't deliver on their rhetoric, this PEF administration may be devoured by the small fry of the union. That would be unfortunate. Perhaps it's too early to express sympathy for the PEF administration which has done a pretty good job overall, over what could be a Pyrrhic victory on the dues structure, but maybe it is not too early to think they deserve some sympathy.

Bob Fisher

NYS COMPTROLLER, CARL MCCALL AND AFL- CIO GUEST SPEAKERS ADDRESS DELEGATES

Executive Vice President, Linda Chavez-Thompson spoke before the 800 delegates of the PEF convention in Syracuse.

McCall urged delegates to support the candidacies of Vice President Al Gore and US Senate hopeful, Hillary Clinton, both endorsed by PEF.

He also noted the passage of a permanent COLA bill, long sought after by PEF. President Benson, later presented McCall with an award for his efforts on the COLA.

Chavez-Thompson urged delegates to be informed and active in upcoming state and federal elections.

COORDINATOR'S CORNER - CONT'D

Andrew Cuomo let his need to gratify his ego and ambitions take away a golden opportunity to achieve the real and noble milestone of electing New York's first African American governor? Shouldn't Mario's posturing about "simple justice" extend to his immediate family, or does his wisdom only extend to the poor schnooks who constituted Mario's "Family of New York"?

Hope springs eternal. Perhaps Mario Cuomo will tell Andrew to do the right thing by H. Carl McCall and extend diversity to higher political office. Maybe Andrew will graciously defer his ambitions and fall upon his sword in the interest of increasing diversity in high elected office.

Somehow I doubt that the above will occur for altruistic reasons. Let's look at some analogies. The Clintons and Gores can't do enough to further public education. In fact they're the darlings of the teachers' unions and the public educational establishment. Political positions on public education aside, neither family found it advantageous to place their children in the Washington, D.C. public schools. On one level, I sympathize with the Clintons and Gores making choices that they deem best for their children. On another level, Gore and Clinton are the highest and most visible public officials, and ought to set an example for the flock that they purport to lead.

What better way to improve the Washington, D.C. school system than to place it under the laser spotlight of publicity that the progeny of prominent politicians would attract? What better use of the White House bully pulpit than to use everyday events (successes and failures) of their children's schools as beacons to the nation as to how to improve public education?

When all is said and done, the rich and famous have "choice," which they shamelessly exercise. The common clay of mankind can only look at more bucks thrown at public education which never seems to arrest the downward spiral of true academic achievement. Based on all of the foregoing, I pose the following question to my readers:

Should Andrew Cuomo live up to his father's noble vision of Simple Justice and leave the Democratic gubernatorial field to H. Carl McCall?

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

By R. H. Harms Jr.,
Executive Board Representative, Div. 258

Listed below is a brief summary of the Executive Board meeting held August 22 & 23, 2000 at the Quality Inn, in Albany.

Paul Cole, Sec /Treas of NYS AFL/CIO swore in the new Executive Board. Paul, on the behalf of Dennis Hughes (President of NYS AFL/CIO) gave a brief welcoming speech.

The printed agenda for this meeting was approved.

Minutes from the May 17 & 18, 2000 meeting were accepted as presented.

Minutes from the June 27, 2000 meeting were accepted as presented.

Cliff West gave a brief summary of Ethics Case #2000-03, in order for the Board to decide on whether or not they wanted to hear an appeal. A motion to hear the case was defeated.

Presidents Report:

- Roger went over some of his goals.

Focus on member issues, in regard to terms and conditions of employment. Wants to bring everyone together. All in a financially prudent way.

Wants us to have a reputation as a union of professionals, who will listen, but are ready to mobilize.

Wants us to be deeply involved in the Legislative process. More members have to be involved (be mobilizers). To do this we need more money.

There needs to be more trust, to be more effective.

We need deep involvement by our members in all areas.

- Roger restated his priorities.

Job security.

Stronger contracts.

Retirement reform. Despite the gains, there is still room for improvement.

Civil Service reform.

Full staffing.

•He stated that, in public, we need to be speaking with one voice. There is plenty of opportunity for internal debate.

•Roger stated that we need to have the resources to get the job done.

This part of his report was followed by a question and answer period.

•Roger nominated 3 people to be on the Special Elections Committee (Vivian Street, Edith Cooper, Rob Grace). His nominees were approved.

•Roger nominated 3 people to be on the Delegate Elections Committee (Mary Mahoney, Gail Stal-lone, Joe Carusone). His nominees were approved.

John Dillon gave a presentation on the proposed NDRI contract. A motion to send it out to the NDRI membership was approved.

During the AFT convention, this past July, in Philadelphia, Ruth Gaines received the AFT Living Legacy Award. Neila Cardus was unable to be there to receive the same award, so Roger presented it to her at this time.

Secretary / Treasurers Report

•By the will of the body, Jane did not go over the multiple pages of the last quarterly report.

•Jane expressed a desire to implement a salary increase for the PEF M/C staff. They would get 3% retro to July 1, 1999, and 3% retro to July 1, 2000. After some debate (based on the regular PEF staff not having a contract yet), a motion was approved to implement the M/C raises.

•Jane went over the proposed revised Mailing List Policy. A motion was made to approve, and after several additions to the language, it was approved.

Joe Fox, presented a proposed change in the agenda, for the upcoming September convention. He proposed taking out Workshops, on Monday afternoon, and substituting them with another plenary session. This change was approved. He was asked for a more detailed agenda. He agreed to provide it. (We received it later in the day.)

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EXECUTIVE BOARD - CONT'D

After a recess for lunch we went on with Ken Brynien giving an explanation of the PAAEC (Political Action Advisory Elections Committee). After this, a period of nominations (for the committee) took place. We ended up with 10 nominees (after 2 declined) for this 3 person committee. Preparations will be made for a balloting. Balloting will continue on throughout the meeting until three people are elected.

Roger gave an explanation of our affiliates (AFT, SEIU) per capita dues increases.

There was a presentation on the results of the Peter D. Hart Research Associates survey of 500 members and 100 leaders (basically with regards to the proposed dues increase).

Jane presented the proposal for the dues increase. Dues would increase to .9%, the cap on members making over \$80K to be removed, and a cap of \$900 dues for SG-38. She made the motion for the Board to support this proposal. After substantial debate, and a failed motion for a roll call vote, her motion was approved.

We recessed for the day at 4:35 pm.

After coming back into session on Wednesday morning, and Roger explaining where we were with the agenda, Jane was asked about her policy on meal receipts, which had been given to everyone yesterday. After quite a spirited and heated debate, a motion was approved to the effect that she should accept any bonafide restaurant receipt (must include name of restaurant, date, amount), and that if there were any questions, she would be able to investigate the situation. The reason for the expense should be written on the receipt (or your expense voucher). Please note: A receipt is only needed if there is a claim for more than the maximum unreceipted amount of \$20.

Roger talked briefly about the proposed dues initiative. He mentioned that there was a booklet (which we were given) that each of the Delegates would be receiving. All members would also be receiving a large postcard with pertinent facts and information regarding this proposal.

Ron Goldstein gave a brief statement on Health Benefits. Information is available through a link on the PEF web page. Information on health insurance, dental and vision plans are all available.

Legislative Agenda:

- Three additions were made.

- A change in the existing COLA piece was approved. (Full CPI, covering full pension amount.)

- The Agenda, as amended, will be given to the Convention for approval.

Endorsements:

- To start the process, everyone was given an opportunity to pull out any particular endorsements that they didn't agree with, or had any questions about. 15 fell into this category.

- All the others were lumped together, and approved.

Just prior to lunch, the balloting for the PAAEC concluded. After 5 (or 6) rounds of balloting, Pat Wilson, Charlie McAteer and Nancy Becker were elected to the committee.

After lunch we heard an election grievance appeal for Executive Board Seat 475, in Tax and Finance. All sides were given the opportunity to present their case. A fair amount of questioning and debate followed. The Board ended up sustaining the Regular Elections Committee, denying the original grievance.

The Endorsement process continued. In all, but 3 of the remaining 15 endorsements, the Statewide PAC recommendations were approved.

- NYS Assembly District 102. The committee recommended endorsing John Faso. The Board voted for No Endorsement.

- NYS Senate District 60. The committee recommended endorsing Mary Lou Rath. The Board voted for No Endorsement.

- US Congress District 27. The committee recommended to take No Position. The Board voted for No Endorsement.

With all business completed, the meeting was adjourned at 3:35 pm.

Our next meeting is scheduled for December 12, 2000, at the Desmond.

DUES INCREASE HISTORY - CONT'D

from "raiding" other AFL-CIO affiliates, and trying to organize their members. This also precludes our going back to CSEA, another frequently made suggestion, because CSEA became an AFL-CIO affiliate at about the same time as PEF. It seems as though PEF members unhappy with the union are stuck between the proverbial rock and the proverbial hard place.

Over time, the "parent unions" have forgiven part of our debt, little by little. But a very large debt has always remained. If the "parent unions" were to "call in" the loans at this time, PEF would very likely come close to bankruptcy. At the same time, the "parent unions" have increased per capita dues, making it more difficult for us to pay those dues and reduce the debt, while at the same time providing essential member services.

PEF members have always been extremely averse to paying dues at all, and have been known to become borderline violent whenever a dues increase was proposed. Most recently, a Convention Delegate from the Department of Transportation was warned not to go alone to where he had parked his car, if he returned from the Convention after voting "yes" on a dues increase proposal.

This may be the reason why dues aren't increased very often. It also suggests that the framers of the PEF Constitution knew what they were doing when they gave the power to raise dues not to the members, or to the officers, or to the Executive Board, but to the Convention. The rank and file member will never have any real voice in determining if and when dues will be increased, unless he or she happens to be a Convention delegate. And if one of you would like to become a convention delegate, in order to have a voice in this important decision, you must run for delegate each and every year. because no one ever proposes a dues increase until after that year's delegates have been elected.

The last dues increase came into being several years, at a turbulent and hostile convention, which I attended as a delegate. Then President Rand Condell proposed a very modest dollar increase. This was opposed by many union activists, including now Region 8 Coordinator Jeff Satz and now union President Roger Benson. The debate continued for days, with many votes and proposed amendments. At one point Benson, who was then Region 8 Coordinator, attempted to negotiate a compromise with the Condell faction. In exchange for certain concessions, he promised to deliver enough Region 8 votes to put the agreed upon dues increase proposal "over the top." After reaching an agreement, however, Roger Benson proved unable to deliver the Region 8 vote. (Region 8 delegates have his-

torically proven more independent of Regional Coordinator influence than delegates from other regions.)

Finally, just minutes before the Convention was schedule to adjourn, the delegates passed a compromise dues increase package. It took the form of a .8% "due structure." Instead of paying a set dollar amount, members would pay .8% of their gross salary. I believe that this was passed because many people believed that it would end the need for considering dues increase proposals in future years. By tying PEF dues increases to salary increases, we could count on a constantly increasing flow of revenue adequate to meet our needs.

In subsequent years, we have found that union expenses are increasing more rapidly than employee salaries. There are a number of factors, which may explain this problem. We have fewer members than we had ten years ago, due to State "reductions in force," early retirement incentives, and a general shrinkage in the size of State Government. Some people has suggested that some members of the PEF leadership may have misused union funds, or at least used them inefficiently. And then, our pay raises over the past few years have not been impressive. Most members have noted that the cost of living has been increasing more rapidly than our salaries; and it makes sense that PEF's expenses are also increasing more rapidly than its revenues..

Whatever the reasons, the current PEF leadership believed that another dues increase was absolutely essential. It told us that we didn't have enough money to meet our current and future needs. There were dire predictions about possible reductions in service. At the same time, we were told that some of the additional money could be used for more political action, more lobbying, and more advertising—all of which, it was suggested, could help us get future contracts at least as good, if not better, than those negotiated in the past. Finally, we have been assured that additional moneys would help us to enhance our relationship with the "parent unions," and get those "parent unions" to provide us with even better service.

The Convention was considerably less hostile and turbulent than the one which created the .8% dues structure. Apparently, going into the Convention, the dues increase proposal had the support of most of the Regional Coordinators, and they were able to deliver the votes needed for passage.

I have heard all kinds of rumor and speculation about "wheeling and dealing," about "promises of rewards and threats of retribution," But I don't have any facts. Nor would it matter if I did. The dues proposal had

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LEADERSHIP REQUIRES DIFFICULT DECISIONS

By Jane Hallum
Secretary-Treasurer

Sometime during my New York State career, I attended a class, which specifically dealt with responsibilities of supervisors, directors, managers and leaders. The most critical and memorable information that I retained from this class, was the difference between a manager and a leader. Managers "do things right", while leaders "do the right thing". This is a subtle but critical difference for someone who is in charge of a corporation, and must rise to higher ethical and moral plane, or suffer the consequences.

A CEO who is suppressing information about shoddy products, may be improving the company's bottom line, may be keeping the stock price from falling, may be putting their head in the sand and hoping that the truth may never be discovered, may hope that if discovered, the blame can be shifted to someone else, may vehemently deny the facts and lie to the public, but no one would call this person a "leader".

Leaders sometimes have to do things that are unpopular, and those leaders are willing to take the heat, because in their heart they know it's the right thing to do. There are a lot of arm-chair warriors. They can write eloquently, and profusely, but they never lay it on the line. They never take an unpopular position. They never lead the charge. They only criticize and offer pie-in-sky solutions.

I got introduced to the term "gutless wonder" by my mother-in-law, a woman whose husband, an engineer, went blind in his early twenties, leaving her as the sole breadwinner for their four children. She respected the vow "for better or worse". Too proud to take public assistance, she sometimes worked two jobs. Times were tough and one day I told her how much I admired her spirit and I wanted to know why she never gave up. She told me that each year things got a little better. There were more canned goods in the basement and they were able to pay off some bills. She has little tolerance for cowards, or people who lack the courage of their convictions. She obviously took her responsibilities very seriously.

A responsible leader must take unpopular positions when "it is the right thing to do". I think back to my childhood and the civil rights movement. Segregation was accepted. It was popular in some states. How many of us look back at that time and wonder how it could have ever been acceptable? Slavery was popular in the

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DUES INCREASE HISTORY - CONT'D

to be dealt with in a political manner, and politics include wheeling and dealing, promises and threats.

The dues increase was not large. Members will now pay .9% instead of .8%. Most of us will hardly miss the extra money. Those who have objected to the increase have done it largely as a matter of principal.

I don't know how I would have voted if I had been a Convention delegate this year. More importantly, I'm not at all certain that my vote would have made any difference. For a supposedly democratic union, a disturbing large number of decisions seem to be made and implemented by a very small number of people. In this case, approval of the dues increase was certain before the delegates even met to discuss it.

But, at least, we haven't gotten as bad as the AFL-CIO. I've never been to one of their conventions, but I've spoken to people who have. I understand that everything goes like clockwork. Everyone knows which resolutions and bylaw changes will pass and which will fail, before the convention even begins. Also, I've heard that they vote resolutions up or down at a rate of about one per minute, including full debate of the issues. Even PEF isn't that efficient yet. Not yet.

HEARTLAND WANTS NEWS!

In the hope of publishing a little MORE NEWS, and a little LESS DEBATE, we solicit the following material:

For a **BULLETIN BOARD**, we request Division leaders to send us notice of upcoming Division activities and events and such other information as they would like to share with our members.

For **DIVISION NEWS**, we request copies of Division Council minutes. These will be reviewed for items which might be of interest to members of other Divisions within the Region.

For **COMMITTEE REPORTS**, we request copies of Region 8 Committee minutes. Division Committees may also submit reports, if they feel them to be of general interest.

IN MEMORIUM

A GREAT LEADER PASSES

By Howard G. Baumgartner

What can I say about the passing of Mike Darcy? Often an opponent, sometimes an enemy of mine. Sometimes, because of politics and intrigue, we lose sight of the reality of things—that we are all brothers and sisters with common goals, although we sometimes differ in our methods of obtaining those goals. I will miss Mike very much. I feel his loss greatly, and wish that there were some way in which I could offer his family comfort. There is none. What can one say? But I will pray for him, and for them. And I myself will take comfort in the idea that he has gone to a better world, where we will see him again, and where there will be no conflict, and no tears, forever.

DIFFICULT DECISIONS - CONT'D

South during a period in our history. President Lincoln knew it was wrong. I'm sure there are many examples of popular opinion that are contrary to the betterment of our society, and it takes extraordinary people to swim against the tide.

The leaders of this union reviewed our finances, our mission and our goals. They had the courage to put forth an unpopular idea of a modest dues increase. They recognized that we could not be effective with the current dues structure; that we could not move forward. There would be "no increase in the canned goods" in the basement; we wouldn't be able to pay our bills. We would be lacking in spirit and consequently we would not be able to serve the membership. The union would deteriorate to a social club. The officers, the trustees, eleven of the twelve regional coordinators, nearly ninety

per cent of the Executive Board, voted to support this increase. These people deal with the fiscal realities. They have intimate knowledge and they acted responsibly as your leaders. The Convention delegates voted in excess of 75% to support the dues increase because they were convinced by the facts that the increase was needed, not just wanted. I applaud their courage and commend them on their leadership.

It is now time to move this union forward, to concentrate on securing a better contract, to deal with understaffing, to protect our jobs, to seek even better retirement reform. There will be those who want to cry over spilled milk, who want to dwell in the past, and who want to continue to waste the membership's time and effort on debating an issue which had overwhelming support. Let us not be diverted from our mission. We are here to advocate for the members, to improve the terms and conditions of their employment. Let us be a "house united", not a "house divided".

PAC REPORT

The Region 8 PAC met on October 4 at PEF HQ in Latham. Local endorsements were discussed.

The PAC was addressed by Theresa Portelli, incumbent Albany City School Board President, and also a PEF member. After her presentation, the PAC voted to endorse her.

The PAC was also addressed by Mark Mishler,

who is running in a 3 way race for Albany County DA. After his address, there was much discussion. A motion was made to refer the issue to the endorsements committee which was to interview the other 2 candidates, Paul Clyne and Paul Derohannesian II.

At the previous PAC meeting in September, it was announced that Tom Commanzo, of OGS, had been appointed as Vice Chair by Region 8 Coordinator, Jeff Satz. He joins Chair Lou Mattrazzo and Treasurer Rob Grace as PAC officers until the next election in April 2001.