HEARTLAND

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

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PEF Proposes Dues Increase

On August 7, PEF informed it's members of a proposal to increase dues which will be voted on at the PEF Convention scheduled for September 13, 2000 in Syracuse, NY.

The increase, which will raise dues from a flat rate of .8% to .9% and eliminate the cap, was said to be needed primarily for the purpose of funding the next contract fight back campaign.

In addition, the notification explained, the International Unions of which PEF is a member have increased their assessments.

PEF asserted they will have a projected deficit next year of $800,000. This did not include increased revenue of $600,000 PEF estimates will result from increased salaries due to the contract settlement.

PEF President Roger Benson had earlier this year stated at an Executive Board meeting, there would be no dues increase in the foreseeable future.

PEF claims an additional $2.9 million will be generated by the increase in the next 3 years. A proposal to only eliminate the cap would increase revenues $250,000, according to Secretary-Treasurer Jane Hallum.

Contract Ratification

The Public Employees Federation overwhelmingly ratified a contract with the state giving workers a 13 percent pay raise over four years.

The PEF executive board agreed to the deal June 10 and members ratified it in a vote concluded August 11.

It provides annual raises for more than 51,000 state workers. Running from April 1, 1999, through March 31, 2003, the contract provides for raises of 3%, 3%, 3.5% and 3.5%, with the first raise effective in October 1999, and the remaining raises effective in April. It also includes a $500 signing bonus.

In a vote of 33,899 to 2,876, PEF members joined the Civil Service Employees Association, the United University Professions, District Council 37 (rent regulation unit employees in New York City) and Council 82 (corrections supervisors) in accepting new pacts this year.

The New York State Correctional Officers Police Benevolent Association, offered a similar pact for its roughly 23,000 prison guards, failed to achieve ratification. Also working without a contract are employees of the New York State Police and Graduate Student Employees Union.

PEF Endorsements

The Region 8 PAC met July 20, 2000 to vote on local endorsements. Endorsed this year were:

For US Congress: John Sweeny and Mike McNulty, who was pre-endorsed.

For the Senate: Joe Bruno, Neil Breslin and Hugh Farley.

For Assembly: Bob Prentiss, Jack McEneny, Paul Tonko, Jim Tedisco, Betty Little, Ron Canestrari, John Faso and Pat Casale.

Also, at this meeting, PAC Chair Millie Lewis of DOCS announced her retirement from state service and the PAC. Lou Mattrazzo of DOH, was appointed to be new PAC chair filling out the remainder of the term.

COORDINATOR'S CORNER
DUES INCREASE LOOMS OMINOUSLY

By Jeff Satz

A. Background and Historical Perspective

No sooner are PEF's elections over and the contract on its way to ratification than PEF determined to put forth a dues increase proposal at its upcoming annual Convention.

Dues increases are never popular, but may, in certain circumstances, be necessary for organizations to perform vital functions. Confidence by administrations that they can obtain dues increases, can make it too easy not to look at structural reform, belt tightening and other efficiencies.

PEF, until 1989, had a rather sordid history regarding dues increases. Some highlights are as follows:

1.Organizers from PEF's American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and Service Employees International (S.E.I.U.) affiliates put out a propaganda piece; "$58.50 or fight." This leaflet which was circulated to Professional, Scientific and Technical Unit (PS&T) members signified that if PEF gained certification as bargaining agent, it would keep the CSEA dues of $58.50 per member per year;

2.When PEF finally took over as the certified bargaining agent for the PS&T Unit, in 1979, then President John Kraemer unilaterally raised our dues in contravention of our Affiliates' Pledge of $58.50;

3.When Betty Hoke and Jim Sheedy swept in as President and Secretary-Treasurer, in 1982, they cited "fiscal problems" to justify a temporary dues increase;

4.Hoke and Sheedy came back in 1983 and obtained permanency of the 1982 dues increase plus extra dues revenue;

5.Rand Condell and Jim Sheedy were elected in 1985 and came to PEF's 1986 Convention with another dues increase. Promises were made about obtaining better contracts and expanding certain services;

6.PEF's dues structure went from a flat rate to a graduated rate based upon income brackets;

7.Condell and Sheedy were unchallenged in the 1988 election and came in with a dues increase based on the graduated structure in 1989. The usual promises of better contracts and enhanced services accompanied this proposal.

It was at this point that Roger Benson, myself and several others organized to limit the proposed dues increase to a more reasonable one based upon inflation. We formed a CAP dues committee and came to the Convention with a counterproposal. The 1989 Convention turned out to be bitterly divisive and after several days of an ebbing and flowing tug-of-war, the proposal on the floor was amended to .8% of gross salary with a cap at a relatively high level.

Proponents of the percentage of salary structure, argued that PEF would never go through a Convention blood bath over dues again, since PEF's income increases would be automatically based on increases in the income of PEF represented employees. I did not subscribe to this theory because of PEF's propensity to spend as if revenue could be plucked from trees. The proposal, however, passed amidst great controversy over its legality and over counting of delegate votes. Rand Condell's subsequent defeat is attributable in part to his "victory" in obtaining this large dues increase.

From 1989 to the present, PEF has not raised dues. This, despite an illegal lag payroll, four years of zero salary raises and relatively small raises during years that salaries increased. In a manner of speaking, PEF's income was placed on a performance basis, and PEF was forced to live within its means.

In 1993, then President Howard Shafer, placed a dues decrease proposal before the Convention. This

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HEARTLAND

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

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The Dues Proposal–The Choice is Ours

By Roger E. Benson

PEF's greatest asset is a well informed membership, who, given the necessary information can draw their own conclusions concerning the dues increase. Our challenge is to cut through knee-jerk responses, inflammatory rhetoric, and the shouting and complaining to decide the issue based upon facts and critical thinking. The real issue is the direction and growth of PEF. Do we move forward and build our strength or fall back reduce services and mobilization and leave ourselves to the mercy of politicians and moneyed interests to determine our fate?

The facts are undeniable; PEF's revenues have been flat for the last five years. Payments to our internationals AFT and SEIU are going up significantly, and without an increase in revenue PEF will be operating at a deficit of $875,000 in fiscal year 2001-02 that is projected to grow to $2.6 million by fiscal year 2005-06. PEF needs a dues increase just to meet our financial obligations and service requirements under the law.

In 1989, a dues increase was approved at PEF's convention. The increase based dues on a percentage of salary. It was said by some (not me) that another dues increase would never be needed because, when our members' wages go up PEF's revenue goes up. However, this hasn't been the case. Because of downsizing, PEF's membership has dropped 6,000 over the past five years, and it is not what it was in 1989. Additionally, attrition and retirement incentives, have caused our more senior higher paid members to leave state service, and if they are replaced, it is with less senior lower paid members, further depressing revenues. These conditions have conspired to flatten PEF's dues revenue.

We have made great strides over the last few years, a stronger contract, improvements in pension benefits, and legislative successes that saved and improved the jobs of our members. We accomplished this with your help and the help of our internationals who were pressing our interests to the State at the highest levels, using the backing of their over 700,000 members in New York State.

With the efforts to downsize and privatize public services at the federal level, our internationals provide a voice against big business interests and the right-wing anti-public service forces in Washington. This is important because almost half of the agencies where our members work receive federal funding, funding which our members rely on for their jobs.

We have a plan to build our strength, by forming the coalitions necessary to be successful on the state and federal level, expanding the use of new technology, strengthening our mobilization efforts, building our political action program, and providing the resources we will need to achieve better contracts. And, we will continue to account for every cent of the dues increase to you in a regular audit and annual report.

The bottom line is simple. The increase is less than $1 per week for the average member, a small investment to continue the progress we have made, and to give ourselves the tools to fight for our jobs, better contracts, and our futures.

Detailed information and justification for the dues proposal can be found on the Internet at www.pef.org.

MAJOR U.S. RESEARCH UNIVERSITY DISCOVERS NEW ELEMENT!

The heaviest element known to science was recently discovered by investigators at a major U.S. research university. The element, tentatively named Administratium has no protons or electrons and thus has an atomic number of 0. However, it does have I neutron, 125 assistant neutrons, 75 vice neutrons, and 111 assistant vice neutrons. This gives it an atomic mass of 312.

These 312 particles are held together by a force that involves the continuous exchange of meson-like particles called morons. It is also surrounded by vast quantities of lepton-like particles called peons. Since it has no electrons, Administratium is inert. However, it can be detected chemically as it impedes every reaction it comes in contact with. According to the discoverers, a minute amount of Administratium causes one reaction to take over four days to complete when it would have normally occurred in less than one second.

Administratium has a normal half-life of approximately three years, at which time it does not decay, but instead undergoes a reorganization in which assistant neutrons, vice neutrons, and assistant vice neutrons exchange places. In fact, an Administratium sample's mass actually INCREASES over time, since with each reorganization some of the morons inevitably become neutrons, forming new isotopes. This characteristic of moron promotion leads some scientists to speculate that perhaps Administratium is spontaneously formed when-

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ever morons reach a certain quantity in concentration. This hypothetical quantity is referred to as "critical morass."

THE BUDGET OF PEF AND THE DUES PROPOSAL

by Robert Fisher

PEF notified its members recently that it wished to "propose a modest dues increase" at the September 2000 convention. They have also promised that "During [the period up to the convention] we will provide extensive documentation demonstrating the need and rationale for this proposal."

The PEF administration may well blizzard the delegates with numbers and rhetoric in the coming weeks, but in the material so far released there is little enlightenment. The problem is fundamental. PEF apparently never has prepared an action budget - i.e., a budget narrative that relates income to organization objectives.

Such a budget narrative is not a cure-all for PEF's problems. However, just doing it might be a valuable exercise. For one thing, it would highlight for delegates what objectives that the union is dedicated to achieving will be delayed or unmet by failing to authorize more dues.

Secretary-Treasurer Hallum has not minced words about the dire need for the dues increase. She will have to make painful decisions and she has vowed to "spread the pain." She and President Benson would take a pay cut. Furthermore, PEF departments would close or be consolidated. Delegates to future conventions would have to pay their own way, she is claiming, if the dues increase does not pass.

How much better it would have been if she had explained how we could more adequately accomplish our objectives with additional revenue! Alas, she cannot enlighten us on the benefits of more money because in all her tough rhetoric, she has never addressed the relationship between income and agency mission. For example, consider the following. One main objective of the union is insuring employee rights in the workplace by defending members accused of violation of agency policy and bringing grievances against management. The Secretary-Treasurer might tell us what portion of dues is spent on defending members accused of violating their agency rules on time abuse or for incompetence in performing their official duties. Which units participate in that work and why? How would that mission be affected by failure to authorize a dues increase? How much additional revenue does the Secretary-Treasurer need to fulfill that mission?

Given the way they have gone about pushing for support for the dues increase, President Benson and Secretary-Treasurer Hallum have fostered the impression that the only important expenses are those related to paying the Internationals their increased per capita dues. Everything else, including the legislative function of the union performed by the convention delegates and Executive Board, is of secondary importance and can be sacrificed if need be. I do not really believe that this is how the PEF administration feel but without an action narrative for other missions of the union they can hardly dispel the impression they are creating that paying the Internationals is our only clear objective.

The point of these observations is that dues increase should not be considered outside the context of the need for PEF to do a proper budget. How else can we delegates evaluate the materials the PEF administration has distributed on the "Proposed Allocation of Funds?" PEF has told the shop stewards and delegates that they wish to build a "war chest." What exactly does PEF mean by "war chest?" Apparently, they have in mind to assist members whose agencies may be contemplating layoffs. This is commendable. But absent a budget narrative it is difficult to understand why they think this is a more pressing priority than both mobilizing/training and political action" combined (for the enhanced revenues they expect from a dues increase). Indeed, without a budget narrative to explain in detail how it will be spent the "War Chest" is nothing more than a big pot of money. It will be a cynosure for anyone with ideas of their own on how to spend it. What is to stop the staff union, now negotiating a new contract, from seeing it as a healthy surplus (thanks to the largesse of the PEF members) and demanding a large piece of it for themselves? Simply calling a pot of money "War Chest" will not be adequate to protecting it from being used for other purposes.

The amounts set aside for "Mobilizing/Training ($0.325 million) and "Political Action ($0.200 million) are unexplained. Is this money in addition to other resources for these purposes? If political action is as important as President Benson argues, why does not the money allocation for political action at least keep pace with inflation? How did they arrive at these initial amounts for 2001-2002?

The PEF administration have pointed with justifiable pride at their fiscal prudence in reining in, for example, the overhead costs of reproduction and postage. However, they have not set forth a lucid statement of the union's priorities in the context of the budget. It is not too late for them to address this. Then the union can address how it will generate the needed revenue.

LETTERS

To the Editor,

What happened to additional accruals for post 1982 hires? In the last two months we have oriented over 40 new members in the Department of Health.

With retirements of current employees encouraged by the 2 years of extra credit tier 1 & 2 members will receive under the new legislation just passed, the group of employees earning 2.75 sick leave per pay period is the largest it has ever been and will grow bigger every day.

The value of their contract is less than that of a pre 82 hire, and they get hurt all the way to their retirement when it comes time to sell back accruals for insurance. Also, many will exhaust their time for such things as maternity or serious illness because they won't accrue time as fast as their pre 1982 co-workers. This isn't fair!

I hope that our E-board really represents all the members and votes that two contract tiers, one for members hired before 1982 and another for those hired after 1982, is totally unacceptable. We are the only Union in this situation. How can 2 members represented by the same union have sick leave accrue at 13 days annually for one member but only 10 days annually for the person working next to them ???? How is this fair ??

I'm voting no in the general ratification and hope that it is defeated. If not, at least it would only pass by a smaller margin than the other bargaining units. This will send a message to all that we are one Union dedicated to fairness for all members.

That nonsense about encouraging the department to allow the use of other accruals (the bone to the post '82 masses) is ludicrous. I've been in this department for fourteen years, and if I wanted to spend my vacation time recovering in bed instead of enjoying Hallandale Beach that was my business.

As one MC employee said to me, how they use their vacation and holiday accruals is their business. They (the MC manager) were right on in saying that its their earned time to use as they wish.

E-board members, please debate this vigorously. Just because the members vote yes doesn't mean they like it. It just means that they've resigned themselves to their inferior situation. But make no mistake about it, support for the Union in the Corning Tower is diving and in the Wadsworth Labs it is dead! They are most concerned with issues relating to bread and butter, and do not see their situation vis a vis CSEA in accruals and salary scale in any way improving. So they'll ratify.

Please forward this on to Roger (and anyone else for that matter). Our members (many whom I never thought would) marched in front of the Capitol in January for this?

Please forgive me for probably showing what is my worst side. But you all you know that I can be very passionate on a issue that I really believe in my heart is right.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephen M. Sherokey

August 2, 2000

Dear Jeff,

We spoke about what great luck I have had with Union initiatives.

I worked for the state for 2 1/2 years in 1970. I left and did not return until 1989. Because of the Tier Reinstatement Bill, I was placed in Tier 1. This allowed me to be credited for the 2 1/2 years at no cost to me. Also, because of the Tier I incentive, I will receive 1 1/2 years additional time.

Then… they pass the Veterans Buyback Bill which gives me 3 additional years.

So, the final result Is an additional 7 years added to my retirement.

Needless to say, I'm overjoyed at my good fortune.

Chris Rapazzo

PEF ELECTION RESULTS

PEF President, Roger Benson and his entire slate of 3 Vice Presidential Candidates, Secretary Treasurer Jane Hallum and 3 Trustees, were re-elected without opposition. The only declared opponent, James Israel, was not on the ballot as he only received 17 of 5,300 signatures needed. In 1997, Israel received 12 signatures.

Benson's re-election marks the first time since 1988 a President has been re-elected. Rand Condell

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failed, because it was so miniscule as to raise the question, in some quarters, that its purpose might be solely political. Some feared that PEF couldn't afford to decrease dues amidst the depredations of the unlamented former Governor Mario Cuomo.

In 1996. then President Jim Sheedy was questioned regarding PEF's income needs. He stated that in his opinion, PEF would need a dues increase before the year 2000. Those of us who were familiar with Jim's modus operandi as Secretary-Treasurer took this to mean that Jim would try to obtain a dues increase immediately after the 1997 PEF elections or in 1998. This would leave a few years prior to the year 2000 elections for members to get over the bad taste of increased dues.

Roger Benson, Sheedy's 1997 opponent, stated that a Benson administration could live with the monies generated by increases PEF obtained for its membership. Roger won the election and ironically PEF survived without a dues increase.

Fast forward to the present. PEF just obtained a contract that its reelected President, Roger Benson, has touted as a pattern breaker. Roger is now going hell-for-leather to meet constitutional requirements to put a dues increase proposal before this year's Convention.

PEF is proposing to increase dues from .8% to .9% and to take off the CAPS that currently take effect at $80,000.00. According to PEF, this proposal is being driven in part by the voracious appetites of our international affiliates. Roger also wants to develop a massive front loaded contract fund. Ostensibly this might be viewed as a veiled threat to pressure CSEA not to set its usual low bargaining pattern. It also might serve to pressure whomever the Governor might be, that PEF has money to fund advertising, demonstrations, etc. and thus create political embarrassment. Some money would go to mobilization/training, etc.

B. The Wonderful World of Affiliates

Our Internationals and other mandated affiliations take increasing amounts of money from us (projected at around $8.1 million in FY 2005) and provide little effective services to PEF. In fact, PEF provides a full panoply of services. Therefore, we probably make less demand for services than most other locals do on our affiliates. The affiliates made rather extravagant promises back in 1977 and 1978 regarding how much clout they possessed and how we would do much better than CSEA once PEF affiliated with AFL-CIO through AFT and SEIU.

The reality has been that we were pretty much on our own through the rough sledding under Democratic Governors Hugh Carey and Mario Cuomo. Our affiliates either had what they construed as "bigger fish to fry," politically, and didn't wish to expend a chip, or were adverse to a public tussle with such "friends of labor" as Carey and Cuomo.

In 1992, representatives of our AFT affiliate told me that it was time to accept Cuomo's double zero plus heavy give back contract. They said we would not do better and could do significantly worse than CSEA, since Governor Cuomo might choose to punish PEF. This was very different from the clout promised by AFT and SEIU in 1978.

The Internationals showed a bit more energy with republican Governor Pataki as our antagonist. AFT gave PEF $250,000 for an ad campaign. While we readily accepted this grant, I wonder how much of the thought behind the contribution was related to AFT's support of Al Gore and Hillary Clinton. The ad campaign certainly would not be pro Pataki or George W. Bush. The campaign might also comport with AFT's views toward the next gubernatorial campaign and its likely support of the Democrats.

Short of a decertification campaign, we are stuck with our affiliates. AFT and SEIU are our parents. Nurturing parents should want their children to have the tools and succor to succeed. PEF should not be viewed simply as a cash cow.

If you keep food in a bowl a mangy cur dog will keep coming over to the bowl and will eat until it bursts. This is somewhat analogous to AFT and SEIU regularly imposing more severe per capita taxes on PEF. The only difference is that unlike the mangy dog, it is PEF that will eventually self-destruct. The affiliation racket is also comparable to such pyramid sales schemes as Amway.

The Internationals expend a great deal on organizing which has at best only a marginally favorable impact on PEF. New York is one of the more union dense states particularly in the public sector. The density means that there are more competitors for a shrinking budgetary pie.

Another major expenditure of our Internationals is in the political arena. As regards our contracts, I have already described how ineffectual they've been. They tend to tie us into the Democratic party and its agenda. Some of this is better for us. The Democrats are not generally as strident for example about privatization/contracting out. A look at AFL-CIO's COPE

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agenda will show that many of their positions are either of no relevance or could be antithetical to PEF's interest.

The vagaries of AFL-CIO supported national health insurance may not play in favor of PEF members.

The AFL-CIO would like guaranteed health insurance. This is good for low paid workers or those who have little or no health insurance. This would take this issue "off the table" for many locals. No one has ever considered what impact National Health Insurance would have for those like us who have health insurance coverage. Would this improve ours, or would ours be leveled to a lowest common denominator scheme? What would be our cost to see health insurance provided on a broader basis whether we see improvements or not?

PEF needs to negotiate a recognition of our reality with its Internationals. The recent decertification of AFSCME Council 82, by the Correction Guards is some barometer of State workers discontent with a union movement that organizes, charges large per capita taxes, but falls short when it comes to delivering.

It's not in the best interest of AFT and SEIU to be in public controversy with a major local or to expend great treasure trying to hold us in their thrall. They should prefer to expend those monies on organizing and politics. One would hope that reasonable people can come up with equitable solutions.

C. PEF's Piece of the Pie

Roger wants a front loaded set aside for future negotiations. There is no guarantee what form such negotiations will take and how effective advertising and demonstrations will be. As an example, PEF has traditionally pulled its punches when a Democrat has treated us badly.

Subsequent negotiations may also be in an atmosphere of deficits where offers of zero, unlike in the recent round, are real. There will also not be the whopping pay raises for the Governor, Legislature and appointees to help make our case.

Using a fund to influence a CSEA ratification must be viewed in context of our recent experience. In March, PEF's Executive Board allocated money for such a campaign. Fortunately, the money was not spent. It was determined correctly that CSEA members would ratify overwhelmingly.

Reserving too much money for use at the discretion of a President, abrogates Executive Board responsibility to approve a budget and major expenditure. In the past, the President has sought and the Executive Board has given the President authorization to tap reserve funds. Items such as the $350,000 "sick leave buyback" are of dubious value to PEF members. Other expenditures had better justification.

If a President gets discretionary power over large amounts of money and is mistaken in expenditure of such funds, he/she can be subject to severe criticism because decision making wasn't shared with representative bodies such as the Executive Board.

Before PEF contemplates raising dues, leadership needs to be shown to begin a process of structural reform. Our current political structure is top heavy. It's rather like a Cadillac frame propelled by a Yugo engine. PEF doesn't need three (3) Vice-Presidents, twelve (12) Regional Coordinators, an Executive Board of around one hundred thirty (130) and a Convention of a thousand (1,000) delegates. PEF needs a constitutional change putting a new political structure in place within a few years. This would allow some phase-in based on attrition and would give incumbents reasonable adjustment time.

PEF has grown a service structure over the years. This too needs to be reviewed with an eye toward leaner and more relevant. Attrition and vacancy control should be used and staff should be retrained and redeployed to meet current exigencies.

PEF has just received a windfall of money. It must learn to live within its means. If the recent contract is a pattern breaker then PEF's income should be considered justified by its performance. PEF can't have it both ways in spinning the contract as a great success, but saying that despite this, PEF needs more dues.

I have heard the same arguments over the years which equates dues increases to better contracts. The reality is that dues increases have too often only allowed for frivolous spending.There is no guarantee this increase will provide a significant power shift vis-à-vis bargaining with New York State. A $1 million television and campaign funded off budget in 1990-1991 and paid off subsequently is an example of where a massive expenditure didn't yield anything close to a commensurate return.

A dues increase now will have the effect of changing the terms of debate. Those supporting .8 said that now that PEF is guaranteed an income, further dues increases are unnecessary. Raising dues makes this contention a hollow mockery especially with considerable money coming in.

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Coordinator's Corner - cont'd

Mark my words that whether or not this dues increase generates better PEF performance, dues will be raised like clockwork (either immediately after PEF elections or the Convention one (1) year after the PEF election). This was the pattern in the 1980's. For all the promises we got in exchange for enhanced PEF revenue, the 1990's netted us dismal to mediocre contracts with over four (4) years of zeroes.

It's reasonable to ask what's a fair return for increasingly onerous assessments. If the dues proposal passes, I hope that its proponents can keep PEF's membership satisfied regarding bang for PEF's buck.

Election Results - cont'd

was also unopposed that year. In a major turnover, 43 members have left PEF's Executive Board over the spring and summer. More than a third of the board is changing.

The board is now made up of 122 seats, including the statewide officers, but not the three PEF trustees and the appointed representative of PEF Retirees.

Three run-off elections were held to determine the winners for races in which no candidate received more than half of the votes in the triennial elections.

The death of Vice President Jean DeBow has left her seat vacant until it can be filled. The first quarterly special elections to fill board vacancies will begin in October. A total of 35 new members of the board will be among those sworn in at the August meeting, and most of the new members will be serving on it for the first time.

Some board members who are leaving, such as Region 3 Coordinator Linda DeVito and Board Member Stanley Byer from the state Department of Environmental Conservation, began their service on the board in the union's earliest years. Former PEF President, Howard Shafer of the Health Department was defeated by newcomer, Marion Michel.

The election results mark the largest turnover in PEF history and is considered by some to indicate membership desire for a change in direction.

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 May 17 & 18, 2000 at the Holiday Inn, in Suffern, NY.

Ron Manuli was sworn in as a new Board member, from Corrections.

The printed agenda for this meeting was approved with several changes.

Minutes from the March '00 meeting were accepted with 1 minor change.

Presidents Report: Roger stated that the Contract Team would not be here to give a report, due to the necessity of them being available for negotiations in Albany. He would give us an update later on in his report. He stated that 33 months ago, when he took office, he had 3 simple goals: Job Security, A Stronger Contract, and Retirement Reform. These goals have not changed. Tactics have become more formalized. He stated that we do not have enough power, and that our real power comes from the membership. He talked a little about 3 new strategies

1. A need to speak with one voice.
2. A need to build our resources.
3. A need to expand our coalitions with other public sector unions.

He spoke briefly on each of his administration's goals.

• Job security–There have been no layoffs of permanent employees, although there have been some limited losses, due to transfers and relocations. PEF has been able to mitigate quite a few of these.

• Retirement reform–The veterans buyback is still possible. Tier equity is less likely (due to COLA possibility). There is a good chance for passage of some form of a permanent COLA. (The exact type and amounts have not been worked out yet!)

• Contract-Everyone must be patient. Everybody (other unions, legislators) wants a PEF contract settlement. He feels we are close. He will speak more about it later on in the meeting.

His report was followed by a question and answer period.

There was a motion approved to go into Execu-

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Executive Board - cont'd

tive Session, to discuss the status of the USWA (PEF staff union) negotiations.

A presentation was made on the proposed PEF–Canal Corporation 1999–2003 contract. After some debate, a motion was approved to send this proposed contract to the Canal Corporation PEF membership for a ratification vote. (For details of the contract, see your Board Rep.)

There was a motion to hear an Ethics Appeal (ERC #99-13 Close v. Byer). This failed to get the necessary one third vote, of the Board, to hear the appeal.

A presentation was made on the proposed PEF–Coxsackie Regional Medical Unit (RMU) 2000–2001 contract. After some debate, a motion was approved to send this proposed contract to the Coxsackie RMU PEF membership for a ratification vote. (For details of the contract, see your Board Rep.)

Roger spoke on the status of our contract negotiations. Talks are at a delicate stage. He did not feel it was in the best interest of our membership to deal with specific issues at the Board mtg. He did detail some issues which are keeping us from settling right now. (He asked that we be discreet with this information, and to not put it in writing.) He does not feel that we should be at impasse, right now. He feels we can do better at the table. He stated that there are external players that want the contract done (soon) without stupid concessions.

His report was followed by a question and answer period.

There was a motion approved, for support of Roger and the Contract Team.

There was a motion approved to begin an organizing campaign, to organize 60 county attorneys in Nassau County.

Secretary–Treasurer's Report: Jane went over the proposed budget amendments necessary to cover the changes in income and expenditures from last fiscal year. After some discussion, a motion was approved to adopt the budget amendments. There was a discussion on the current status of the Triennial Elections. She noted that all the current Statewide Officers, Regional Coordinators (with the exception of Region 1, the Buffalo area) and Trustees, were automatically re-elected for another 3 year term. An issue of a Division ignoring the policy against double reimbursement for convention meals was discussed. A motion was approved to refer this particular issue, and other issues related to Division spending, to the Divisions Committee. A settlement is being drafted to deal with (finalize) the Sick Leave Buy Back issue.

The Board recessed at 4:20 pm. The Board returned back into session Thursday, 5/18 at 9:12 am.

Legislative Report: There was a recommendation to endorse Hillary Clinton for US Senate. A poll had been taken, of the COPE contributors. Of those responding; 80% were for Clinton, 15% for Giuliani, 3% for others, and 2% for nobody. A motion was made to endorse Clinton. There was a motion defeated to postpone this endorsement until the August Board meeting. The main motion to endorse Clinton was approved.

There was a recommendation to endorse Al Gore for President. A poll had been taken, of the COPE contributors. Of those responding; 79% were for Gore, 13% for Bush, 2% for others (mostly Ralph Nader), and 6% for nobody. A motion was made to endorse Gore. There was a substitute motion defeated to endorse Ralph Nader. The main motion to endorse Gore was approved. There was a motion to endorse Ryland Gaines (husband of Region 12 Coordinator, Ruth Gaines), a Democrat, for the 5th Assembly District (Long Island, Suffolk Co.). After a motion to postpone, until after the primary, was defeated, the main motion was approved. A motion to change the endorsement procedures was defeated.

Member Items: "Guest Speakers at Executive Board Meetings," was postponed to the August meeting. "Scholarship Loan Program," was discussed. A motion was defeated that would have had PEF use money, set aside from the Reserve, to loan PEF members for educational purposes. "Convention Department Caucuses," was withdrawn. "IMF and World Bank Resolution," was discussed. A motion was approved to send this Resolution, as amended, to the SEIU Convention. "Reconsideration of Out-Of-State Convention Site," was discussed. After debate, focusing on the Board's decision at a previous meeting, to hold the 2003 convention in Montreal, a motion to reconsider our decision was defeated (by a wide margin).

Roger presented awards to Linda Devito (outgoing Region 3 Coordinator), and the outgoing Executive Board Members, thanking them for all their service to PEF.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:22 am.

Our next scheduled meeting is for August 22 & 23, at the Albany Quality Inn. It is anticipated that a special meeting, to act on the contract, would be needed before the August meeting. (Hopefully within several weeks!)

Loyalty or A Dance with The Pretty Girl?

by Dennis Anderson

Every two years PEF's Region 8 P.A.C. Endorsements Subcommittee interviews a parade of local incumbent statewide officeholders and their challengers. All purport to come as friends seeking our endorsement. I have the privilege along with several others of volunteering some 60 hours over a period of two months to listen to all of them.

Candidates receive a standard letter inviting them to arrange a mutually convenient appearance before the committee. Every letter includes an identical questionnaire of what the committee will ask on PEF's issues.

Thirteen questions cover: Taylor Law Reform, Civil Service, Budget Issues, Privatization, and Retirement. The 14th question, "What other issues do you feel are important?" is open-ended. The amount of preparation varies. I listen closely to all of them, and what I hear is revealing.

This year's most difficult choice is between the 'retired' celebrity columnist and radio talk show host Dan Lynch and three-term incumbent Assemblyman Bob Prentiss. Voluntarily Lynch gave our committee a written and signed response to our questionnaire. Prentiss gave us a report containing his Assembly bills, memos of support, legislative history and current status, and voting records on every pertinent bill for each question in the questionnaire.

Lynch's written responses showed intelligence, good intentions, and an admirable effort to learn our issues, but indicate he has only been an observer and lacked the 'insider' perspective of the difficult political environment in which PEF is fighting to survive.

The responses from Prentiss focused on that political environment and his efforts to help PEF. Not only did Prentiss provide a report with a hard copy of the public record of his support of all of PEF's issues, but as he responded to questions in the interview, he directed us to the page number of pertinent pending legislation for each issue so the committee could follow along.

Of the issues that Dan Lynch felt were important, his written response stated that we need, "Tax reduction through consolidation of local services. We need to provide State incentives for consolidation of those myriad services." I found that disturbing because Lynch wants to use State tax dollars for incentives to consolidate towns, villages, and school districts.

Lynch's proposal would use State money to facilitate the layoff of potentially thousands of our union brothers and sisters who work in local government. This ill-advised proposal would also hurt state workers by reducing the amount of money available to fund State Operations and our salaries.

What issues did Bob Prentiss feel were important? He expressed relief that we had won the 1995 battle to keep Governor Pataki from moving thousands of State employees to Kingston. (Bob Prentiss was the first Republican to go public with his opposition to Governor Pataki's 'geographic patronage'. His courage in standing up against a governor in his own party caught the attention of the media and transformed our fight into a winning bipartisan effort as other area Republican lawmakers followed suit.) Bob felt the Townsend-Prentiss Resolution hand-delivered in February 2000 to Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver had good prospects because of its 33 bipartisan multi-sponsors. The Resolution would have put the New York State Assembly on record as recommending the MTA (Metropolitan Transit Authority) agreement as a model for settling the then current round of contract negotiations.

PEF's choice in this endorsement contest isn't easy. On one hand we have a retired newspaper editor and radio celebrity who might attract more media exposure. On the other hand we have a three-term incumbent Assemblyman re-elected with 74% of the vote in the last election, who enjoys a two to one registration advantage in his Assembly District, and who has consistently championed our causes in the legislature.

One says he'd like to be our friend and has recently written some favorable newspaper columns, but the other risked his political career to save our jobs and has been a reliable friend in the legislature for the past six years. Bob Prentiss is a marine veteran of the Korean War, who has the Marine Corps motto, Semper Fidelis on his car bumper. It is the credo he lives by. What credo does PEF live by?

What is at stake in deciding this endorsement is nothing less than PEF's credibility with the legislature. The question is whether PEF can muster the courage to remain loyal to Bob Prentiss, who has been universally recognized within the legislature as a proven friend of PEF, or whether PEF will yield to seduction by the siren song of celebrity and dance with the pretty girl. Undoubtedly the answer will influence legislators when they determine the degree of support they can afford to give PEF's issues. Why should legislators stick their neck out for PEF, if after taking the risk, PEF does not stick by them?

Contract Settlement/Battlefield Assessment

By Jeff Satz
Region 8 Coordinator

After an arduous struggle, PEF has tentatively accepted a contract. The Union as an organization is now bound to make its best efforts to "sell" the agreement to PEF's membership. It is important now and over the next several years to have a realistic internal discussion about this contract. We should not be blinded by PEF's good faith obligation to obtain ratification by its membership. In the interest of brevity, I'll attempt to deal with a limited number of points,

On the positive side, this contract is the first since the 1991-1994 agreement not to include zeroes. Save for the first year, raises are payable at the commencement of each fiscal year.

There doesn't appear to be major concessions at the expense of members. We are assured by PEF that changes on the timekeeping issue will not result in time clocks, docking and a rash of disciplinary actions related to swipe cards. The union has made some concessions (e.g. on amounts of E.O.L.) but this doesn't impact directly on the membership. Some concessions in the health insurance area are offset by gains.

The contract represents some improvement over the proposal that was rejected by CSEA members in March of 1999. There are various spins explaining how the unions arrived at a slightly higher plateau. My own opinion is that the seminal event was that the Governor's Office and Danny Donahue grossly miscalculated the discontent in the State workforce. State public sector unions and their membership have generally been supine. There has been no garbage State workers wouldn't eat with great gusto because long-term starvation foments a slobbering sort of salivation.

Pataki and the politicians were guilty of bad timing. After a decade of suffering under selectively placed deficit agendas of Mario Cuomo and his successor, State workers couldn't help but to view the disconnect between legislative and executive pay raises, and the paltry raises offered by the Governor with outrage.

The massive rejection by the CSEA members created a serious political dilemma for Danny Donahue, who was facing a tough election challenge. Danny felt a need to survive and the Pataki administration seemed sympathetic to Danny's political needs. Some suggest that the Governor felt an obligation to pull Danny's political chestnuts out of the fire.

The Legislature and Governor could not have been happy with the prospects of unions calling continuous public attention to their lusty gorging at the public trough while begrudging the workforce fair raises. An early settlement was not likely under such conditions.

The unions were rightly critical of the gubernatorial and executive management level raises. In my opinion, the unions missed the bus by being largely silent on legislative pay raises. The Governor and the Legislature couldn't have gotten their raises without mutual back scratching which blurred partisan distinctions. The Legislature needed to hear, in no uncertain terms, about the union's discontent with the collective groveling induced by the Taylor Law, and the marginal parts of the State budget that are allocated to personnel costs for State civil servants.

A declaration of impasse in April or May of 1999 (coincident with the State bargaining gambit of offering zeroes) would have sent the, Legislature the message that this August body (absent significant movement) might be asked to impose a one year wage settlement. It would not look good for them to treat us less generously than they treated themselves. Impasse has risks and is not always a magic formula, but it is an honest

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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.

Satz: Contract - cont'd

expression of workers' frustration with the State's posture and the Taylor Law's inequities. We would at least not pretend to be bargaining, and our fight would be over money which everyone understands. Meaningful Taylor Law reform will only occur when it doesn't shield the powers that be. Some say that in the Spring of 1999 PEF had too many items on the table to attempt impasse. The reality is that in the end we dropped most of the items. Most contracts result in a limited number of changes so those who understood bargaining knew that it was a matter of time before the focus was narrowed to a manageable number of issues. Perhaps sooner would have been better than later in this case.

Impasse doesn't preclude negotiating and if propitious, the parties can always come out of impasse and bargain directly.

A major selling point for this contract are the pension enhancements. After ten years of service, pension Tier III and IV members will cease contributing three (3%) of their salary. Tier I and 2 members will receive additional pension credit of one month for each year of service up to 24 months.

This is a fine benefit. I wish, however, that it was legislated away from the bargaining table. Pension issues have hitherto been a prohibited subject for negotiations.

The unions made a tactical move by playing on the Pataki administration's willingness to offer something that did the following:

•Provide a benefit at no immediate cost to the State budget.

•Accelerate attrition of the State workforce, thereby creating savings.

•Enable the Governor to obtain an advantage over Comptroller Carl McCall, a potential rival.

The downside is that the unions were complicit in undermining the law which prohibits bargaining over pensions. This genie will not readily be corked back into the bottle. The Legislation for this contract provided the pension enhancement to CSEA because they settled. It included PEF upon reaching contractual agreement. Pataki held the "Sword of Damocles" over PEF's head, and fortunately doesn't appear to have been overly vindictive in using that sword this time.

Future "negotiating" of pension issues might produce any of the following;

1. Disparities between bargaining units. "Negotiations" imply the possibility of different language and benefits between bargaining units.

2. Less pension legislation between contracts. It is in the State's interest to have our pension on the table. They could try to lever changes or concessions. They might dangle goodies out of the pension fund, and thus avoid legitimate expenses to the State exchequer.

3. The State might obtain union complicity to raid the pension fund in exchange for tangible or perhaps intangible benefits.

4. This provides another form of leverage for the Governor's Office of Employee Relations to gain over the State public sector unions.

With all of the foregoing stated, this is far from being PEF's worst contract. There are some other enhancements similar to those obtained by CSEA. I believe it will be ratified easily because after the long struggle the unions have virtually negotiated against themselves.

On the other hand, absent the pension enhancement which doesn't cost the State, the contract is not lucrative enough in view of years of State imposed austerity on its workforce. Even with the State awash in surpluses we didn't get a fair cost-of-living contract plus some makeup money for the stringencies of the last decade. If not now, one might ask when?

The acceleration of retirements will mean major savings to the State. Many will not be around to see the somewhat larger salary increases during the last two years of this contract. The State will save by not filling vacancies or by filling them slowly at the lower end of the rates for each pay grade.

Danny Donahue's political vulnerability allowed PEF to have a larger role In driving a greater militancy for both unions. Despite this, CSEA still has too much unilateral ability to drive the pattern on big ticket items. There are also those who feel that as in past negotiations CSEA left money on the table. When Danny Donahue was reelected and had no more need of PEF, he did his deal, leaving PEF to negotiate in his wake.

We will never know for sure what impact our demonstrations and other activities generated. This is not the first time that such activities were attempted. They were clearly more pointed and focussed rightly on the Governor. I think it is fair to say that they were annoying to Governor Pataki and others. When not used repetitively they generated some good public relations

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aided and abetted by heavy handedness by the Pataki administration. I would not characterize our activities as having brought the State administration to its knees.

Finally, union communications to its activists and members were far more successful than during previous contract negotiations, with the advent of workers owning or having access to personal computers.

In addition to and partly because of some e-mail and web site capabilities, more people were involved than for previous contracts. The member mobilization was also an important factor. The result was that the membership was far more cohesive for a longer period than during the past negotiations that turned out to be lengthy. Disseminating information enhances knowledge which is a potent form of power.

Taylor Law Reform Must Be a Priority

By Jeff Satz
Region 8 Coordinator

As PEF meanders through yet another difficult and acrimonious contract negotiation, one thing is crystal clear. The Taylor Law as constituted, at present, is dysfunctional from the point of view of PEF members.

The Taylor Law (vintage 1968) provides the organizing and collective bargaining framework for New York State's public employees. The obvious buyoff for organized Labor was that the Taylor Law opened New York's legions of public employees to organizational efforts by the labor movement. This represented a significant cash cow for the labor movement.

It may be that organized labor couldn't foresee all of the problems that have ensued, or thought that these could be remedied over time. In truth, there has been some change in the Taylor Law over the years. Police and firefighter unions and New York City Transit workers have been afforded binding arbitration in the event that both sides can't come to closure in contract negotiations. The Triborough Amendment is another change which continues "mandatory" benefits when a contract expires. There have been other changes, but in the interest of brevity, the use of the above is illustrative.

The Taylor Law may also work better for some public sector unions than for others. Police Unions, Fire Unions and New York City Transit workers have binding arbitration, in large part because government fears the impact of illegal strikes by these Unions. The recent New York City Transit Workers' settlement reflected the power of an illegal strike threat by a Union that disdained to use its binding arbitration option.

Generally speaking, the teachers' Union has also done well. This is a function of their political and organizational power. Teachers have some history of illegal strikes as well. The teachers have been adept at tweaking up local school district budgets and playing the State Legislature and various Governors for an ever increasing share of the State budget.

Education and children have become tantamount to "motherhood and apple pie." It is an issue that impacts the middle class voter as well as the poor, Governors and State Legislators get a double benefit from State aid to education. In addition to supporting "motherhood and apple pie," politicians can say that infusion of State money to education holds down local property taxes. This plays well at election time.

New York City municipal workers have generally fared better than State workers under the Taylor Law. This may be a function of the fact that New York City is a Union town. Municipal Unions pack a potent political punch. Some New York City municipal Unions such as Sanitation Workers, Bridge Tenders, etc. can wreak havoc if they are driven to illegal strikes or job actions.

State workers can hold out and demonstrate. Holding out is, to a certain extent, a two-edged sword. Mandatory benefits continue while we hold out. Save where there is a dispute as to whether or not a benefit is mandatory and prior contract language "sunset" the item, PEF doesn't make concessions in mandatory areas while we hold out. PEF should not make concessions in non-mandatory areas, but the State is not impelled to continue these benefits.

The flip side is that salary increases and other areas of possible improvement don't accrue to workers absent a settlement. The State also gets to sit on monies earmarked for contracts and to collect interest and dividends.

Demonstrations are a pinprick tactic and should be tied to a higher level of strategy. Demonstrations are most effective when targeted and pointed. What constituency or groups of constituencies are the demonstrations aimed at? Are they effective and can the momentum be sustained? Does the demonstration actually cause embarrassment or political pain? I'm classifying other legal workplace type activities such as wearing buttons, in the broad category of demonstrations.

The question becomes whether any and all of

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TAYLOR LAW - CONT'D

our tactics make an appreciable dent. A review of PEF's history seems to militate toward pessimism on this note.

PEF should, therefore, bend all efforts, including coupling its member contract mobilization and political action activities with a full-court press for significant Taylor Law reform.

I favor a shortening or consolidation of the current impasse process, but believe that this should occur in the context of obtaining binding arbitration or some equivalent. A shorter impasse procedure, absent an end process that management doesn't absolutely control such as binding arbitration, may work for the State. Management could obtain the concessions they desire sooner with a shorter impasse. Thus, my reason for desiring a shorter impasse process in concert with binding arbitration or some equivalent.

I hear it said in some quarters that PEF will never obtain binding arbitration. I don't pretend it will be easy. If PEF purports to have political power, at some point it must be able to deliver big ticket items like binding arbitration and other major aspects of Taylor Law reform.

As long as Governors and Legislators are insulated from the stark choices afforded PEF by the archaic Taylor Law, they will never deign to pass reforms that loosen their control. For collective bargaining to be real, one side cannot retain absolute control. PEF must pick a strategically calculated point and press the Legislature to do what they don't wish to do, which is to impose a one-year settlement.

There are risks in impasse and legislative hearing, but PEF would break the four-year pattern and be spared State demanded concessions in the short term. That's a bargaining chip when we go back to the table after the legislative imposition. Timing, however, is critical to minimizing risks.

If the Legislature is not happy with being dragged into a contract dispute, it could do the following:

1.Press the Governor to settle on an equitable basis; or
2.Pass legislation that would provide shorter impasse procedures and provide PEF with binding arbitration.

As risky as things are, the alternative to taking prudent risks is to continue negotiating with the major cards stacked against PEF. We have traditionally been the State's fall guy in bad times and are still treated penuriously in good times. All this means is that unionized State workers continue to lose ground. To fulfill PEF's promise we need to get change. I acknowledge it won't be easy and could take time. All the more reason to pursue it single mindedly.

THOUGHTS ON THE PROPOSED DUES INCREASE

by Charles Adams

There will be a dues windfall from the $500 signing bonus and the two retroactive raises. The retroactive raises are adjusted to account for the actual amounts received. The following assumptions were used for calculations: Average PEF salary prior to raises–$48,360 (based on PEF estimates) Number of PEF members–54,000 (from PEF web page)

The dues windfall will be $1,062,107.

The dues collected by PEF will increase over the life of the contract primarily for two reasons–contracted raises and regular step increases received by our members. Over the next two years, 2001 and 2002, PEF members are scheduled to receive an additional 3.5% each year in April. Step increases can range from approximately 3.2% to approximately 3.5% depending on the salary grade. The following assumptions were made for these calculations: Average PEF salary prior to raises –$48,360 (based on PEF estimates) Number of PEF members –54,000 (from PEF web page) The average step increase for all PEF members will be -1% (This figure conservatively takes into account the number of PEF members who are at top of grade and no longer receive step increases. No allowance has been made for longevity bonuses) Pay raises for 2003 and 2004 will be –3% (This is meant to be a conservative estimate.)

Dues Collected	0.8%.	0.9%
2000-2001	$20,891,000*	
2000-2001	$22,596,000	$25,421,000
2001-2002	$23,613,000	$26,564,000
2002-2003	$24,675,000	$27,760,000
2003-2004	$25,662,000	$28,870,000
2004-2005	$26,689,000	$30,025,000

*before the raises for the new contract take effect.

Based on the above figures, these conclusions can be drawn. Without a dues increase, PEF will immediately begin receiving an additional 8.2%. With the 12.5% proposed dues increase, PEF will begin receiving an additional 21.7%. Over the next 5 years, with the proposed dues increase, PEF will have collected from its members an additional $15,404,000. By 2003, PEF will have collected an additional $8,860,000. This figure contrasts sharply with PEF's own estimate of $2.9 million.

PEF Vice President
KILLED IN CAR CRASH

An early morning two-car accident in Brooklyn claimed the life of longtime labor activist Jean DeBow, a Vice President of the New York State Public Employees Federation, PEF President Roger E. Benson announced today. DeBow was a passenger in the car driven that was apparently struck by a drunk driver around 5:00 a.m., at the intersection of Ft. Hamilton Parkway and 65th Street.

Police have charged the driver of the other car, 26 yr. old Erasmo Torres of Brooklyn, with driving while intoxicated. DeBow's friend Dollie Williams, a PEF Executive Board Member, also sustained injuries in the crash.

"All of us at PEF are devastated over the tragic death today of PEF Vice President Jean DeBow," said Benson.

"It's a tremendous personal loss for me, and a tremendous loss for the labor movement."

"Jean and I worked together for ten years improving the lives and working conditions of our members downstate. Jean was an integral part of my administration, and her death leaves a huge void in the PEF family." In addition to being a PEF Vice President, Ms DeBow was a national vice president of the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW), and a member of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU).

BIOGRAPHY

Vice President Jean DeBow NYS Public Employees Federation, AFL-CIO

In June of 1997, Jean Debow was elected a Vice President of the New York State Public Employees Federation, AFL-CIO, the nation's largest union of non-teaching, white-collar employees. PEF represents 53,000 professional, scientific and technical employees across the state, including more than 15,000 in the New York City area.

Prior to winning election as a PEF Vice President Ms. DeBow served as a senior Social Service Management Specialist with the New York State Department of Social Services, the agency that monitors and audits the NYC Human Resource Administration Medical Assistance Program.

Jean earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in Early Childhood Education at Brooklyn College, and her Master of Arts degree in Urban Studies at Queens College, Jean also had a certificate in labor studies from the Women's Program at Cornell University where she was valedictorian, and earned a certificate in mediation and conflict resolution from Long Island University.

Ms. DeBow began her career in the labor movement in Brooklyn in 1981, as a shop Steward in the Department of Social Services for Division 191 of PEF. She quickly moved through the ranks to serve as Division Secretary, Assistant Council Leader, Council Leader, and Executive Board member. Jean also served on the Department of Social Services' labor/management team, and chaired the agency's local labor/management team. In 1994, Jean was elected as PEF Region 11 Regional Coordinator, the highest elected union official in the New York City area, servicing 6,000 members in Brooklyn, Queens and Staten Island.

Jean was active in many social and civic organizations. She was a National Vice President of the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW), representing SEIU, a member of the NYS PEF Black Caucus, a member of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU), and a member of the Holy Trinity Baptist Church in Brooklyn. She also served on the Queens College Labor Studies advisory board, and was a member of the Brooklyn College Black Alumni Association. Ms. DeBow received numerous awards for contributions to her community and the labor movement, including:

1997 Assemblyman Frank Boyland Labor Leadership award;

1996 Union Leadership award from Senator Velmanette Montgomery;

1994 AFT Leadership award; and,

1993 Humanity In Labor award from Springfield Gardens Senior Citizens.

Jean's philosophy evolved from her favorite quotation:

"God's faith can move mountains," a quotation Jean practiced daily.

IN MEMORIUM

by Jeff Satz, Region 8 Coordinator

It's with sadness that we mark the passing of our sister, friend, and Vice President Jean DeBow.

Jean was killed when a drunk driver struck the car in which she was a passenger. This senseless act cost Jean's family and friends a wonderful, caring human being. PEF as a union has been deprived of further contributions from a talented, committed activist who was taken from us in her prime.

A brief summary of some of Jean's associations and attainments are as follows:

•Vice President of the Public Employees Federation since 1997 National Vice President of the Coalition of Labor Union Women

•Member of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists

•Queens College Labor Studies Advisory Board Member

•PEF Region I I Coordinator 1994 - 97 PEF Executive Board member from the Department of Social Services

•Council Leader, Assistant Council Leader and Secretary of PEF Division 191

Jean was a Social Service Management Specialist. She earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Early Childhood Education from Brooklyn College and a Masters Degree in Urban Studies from Queens College. Jean earned a Certificate in Labor Studies from the Cornell University Women's Program and was valedictorian for her class. She also earned a Certificate in Mediation and Conflict Resolution.

Jean was a great colleague and friend. It was always a pleasure to work with her. Jean brought amicability, steadiness, good humor and dedication to all of her endeavors.

Our deepest condolences to Jean's mother Louise DeBow and the many others who had the privilege of being associated with Jean and share our grief.