



**October 2013  
Academic Year**

**Issue 2  
2013-2014**

# **Retirees Newsletter**

**Professional Staff Congress**  
Jack Judd, Editor

## **I. OCTOBER Chapter Meeting.**

The monthly meeting took place on Monday, October 7, at 61 Broadway in the union hall. The topic under discussion that day was: Austerity Education. Speaker: PSC Treasurer Mike Fabricant, co-author with Michelle Fine of *Charter Schools and the Corporate Makeover of Public Education*. Fabricant analyzed how, under the guise of austerity politics, private and governmental forces are compromising K-16 public education.

II. Vice-Chairman Joel Berger has prepared the following summaries of the remarks made by PSC President Barbara Bowen and PSC First Vice President Steve London at our first meeting of the new academic year.

### **President Barbara Bowen State of the Union**

Saluting the Retiree chapter as the “brain-trust, experience trust and the power trust of the PSC,” President Barbara Bowen outlined last year’s accomplishments and previewed challenges ahead for the union and its retirees in her annual State of the Union address. She stressed that the financial foundation of the PSC is healthy, and its budget is strong. The union’s collective bargaining agreement with CUNY

expired three years ago, but salary steps are in place for active members. Steps are still in place because in prior rounds of contract negotiations the union successfully opposed Chancellor Goldstein’s efforts to eliminate them.

The PSC is ready to bargain but conditions for negotiations are not good. In fact, Mayor Bloomberg imposed a budget for this year with no funding to cover salary increases for municipal employees. At the State level, United University Professions, the union representing SUNY faculty, negotiated and ratified a contract with unpaid furloughs and no salary increases for the first three years. The PSC will not engage in a process with that predetermined result.

President Bowen argued the politics of austerity are dominating public policy in New York City and New York State. “Progressive forces must change the political conversation,” she said. The mayor is critical in setting the tone for the next round of labor negotiations. That is one of the reasons the PSC is supporting Bill de Blasio for Mayor.

In reviewing activities of the past year, President Bowen highlighted the recent referendum on the Pathways curriculum, in which 92% of voters expressed No Confidence in Pathways. More than 60% of

full-time faculty took part in the vote. It was a clear rebuke to the new core curriculum and the flawed process which created it. “Pathways is a real attempt to remake the University, and to curb the vision of open admissions,” she said.

According to President Bowen, there is an effort to stratify the student population, and perhaps the faculty, of CUNY. It is a result of former Chancellor Goldstein’s consolidation of power—with centralized decision-making, centralized control of curriculum, and the new university-wide data system, CUNY first. Chancellor Goldstein emphasized private funding for CUNY and successfully pressed for tuition hikes while public funding for CUNY was diminishing. PSC’s response, she asserted, has been to offer an alternative vision for CUNY and fight hard to make that vision a reality.

President Bowen believes that the changes being wrought at CUNY reinforce inequalities. She says the faculty must challenge inequality, racism, classism and sexism as academics, educators and union members. Retirees should think of how CUNY can be reshaped, and then work toward reclaiming the mission of CUNY.

### **III. First Vice President Steve London Organize Against Austerity**

First Vice President Steve London described the “outside/inside” strategy of the PSC to create political change. Working in coalition with other labor, community, and social justice groups, the union has joined in movements which will help provide a broad foundation for our agenda.

On the “inside,” the union is actively involved in electoral politics. With the direction of New York City at stake, the PSC endorsed Bill de Blasio for Mayor, Scott Stringer for Comptroller and Letitia James for Public Advocate. The union also made endorsements in 42 City Council races and

three contests for borough president. (See [psc-cuny.org/endorsements2013](http://psc-cuny.org/endorsements2013)) The strategy is working. Bill de Blasio is the Democratic candidate for Mayor, Scott Stringer is the candidate for Comptroller and 39 PSC-endorsed candidates for Borough President and City Council will be on the ballot in November. Letitia James will face Daniel Squadron in a run-off election to determine the Democratic candidate for Public Advocate. [Update: Letitia James won the runoff election with 59% of the vote.]

The hope is for a new direction—an end to austerity policies. London pointed out that two years ago the Occupy movement made income inequality part of the public conversation. De Blasio picked up that message, and made it the central theme of his campaign. Ending economic inequality is central to de Blasio’s policy agenda as well. He proposed true, universal pre-k for the City’s children and expansion of afterschool programs paid for with a tax surcharge on incomes over \$500,000. And after meeting with the PSC Executive Committee, he expanded this approach to include public higher education, making additional funding for CUNY part of his platform. He proposed using money currently spent on excessive real estate tax breaks—about \$150 million dollars—to fund a 50% increase in the City budget for CUNY. The PSC’s endorsement of de Blasio came, in part, because he sees CUNY as strategic in addressing the inequality which exists in the city.

London remarked that the labor movement was splintered, with some unions supporting Thompson and some supporting Quinn for Mayor. (Neither took a principled stand on austerity.) The PSC took a principled stand, and supported de Blasio when he was at 10% in the polls. Now a broad-based coalition has coalesced around de Blasio’s candidacy. London is proud that the union endorses on principle and he looks forward to the change de Blasio can bring, but he takes nothing for granted. “The PSC must continue to organize against austerity,

regardless of how the general election turns out,” he said. “And we must continue to highlight the importance of public higher education to the city.”

#### IV. OPTIONAL PENSION RETIREES



The Retirees Chapter has an ongoing TIAA sub-committee led by Judith Bronfman and Ted Gerson. They will hold meetings whenever necessary with concerned retirees immediately following the close of the monthly meeting.

#### V. *Labor Goes to the Movies* Presents *Pickpocket*—Fri., Oct. 18



Join us for a screening of *Pickpocket* (France, 1959), the second film in our 2013-2014 *Labor Goes to the Movies* series. The theme of this year’s series is “work.” *Pickpocket* is a startling appreciation of the beauty of manual work, by Robert Bresson, one of the great French precursors of the New Wave. Adapted from Dostoyevsky’s *Crime and Punishment*, it transforms a meticulous criminal craft into visual ballet. Doors open at 6:00 PM Fri., Oct. 18 in the PSC-CUNY Union Hall, 61 Broadway, 16th floor. Light food and drink provided.

Contact the Editor, Jack Judd at: [JJUDD18@OPTONLINE.NET](mailto:JJUDD18@OPTONLINE.NET) , for any suggestions for topics to be included in the Newsletter, and for general inquiries.

**RETIREE CHAPTER WEBSITE:**  
For more information about the chapter and its activities  
as well as an archive of newsletters, go to <http://www.psc-cuny.org/retirees>.