

# Professional Staff Congress

October 24, 2011

To: All Members of the Retirees Chapter

Re: Meeting Notice

The next meeting of the Retirees Chapter of the PSC will be held on **Monday, November 7th** at the **PSC Office, 61 Broadway**, between Rector Street and Exchange Place, **16<sup>th</sup> floor**, from **1:00 to 3:00 p.m.** Photo ID is necessary to enter the building.

This month our speaker will be **Irwin Yellowitz, Professor Emeritis of History, City College**. Dr. Yellowitz's topic will be **"Public Sector Collective Bargaining in NYC: History and the Current Assault"**.

The **Executive Committee** of the Retirees Chapter will meet at the PSC Office, 61 Broadway, **14<sup>th</sup> floor, at 10:30 am**. Anyone interested is invited to attend.

*Dear Retiree:*

*The Newsletter is being distributed this month in two ways: Either by snail mail, or through E-Mail addresses. If you receive this message in your E-Mail box, then all you need do is open the Retiree Chapter link in the PSC website to access the [October issue](#). For those who have not as yet provided the PSC with an E-mail address, you will continue to obtain the Newsletter by mail.*

*The Newsletter can be downloaded at: <http://psc-cuny.org/sites/default/files/Octbr11RetireesNL.pdf>.*

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October 2011 Issue 2  
Academic Year 2011-2012

# Retirees Newsletter

Professional Staff Congress  
Jack Judd, Editor

**I. ANNUAL DUES.** Have you sent a check for your 2011-12 annual dues of \$71 to the Professional Staff Congress, 61 Broadway, NY 10006? **IF NOT, DO SO NOW!**

## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT: JIM PERLSTEIN

### II. CHAIRS REPORT

**Who Would Have Thought?** I was born in 1935, on the very day that the Supreme Court struck down the National Industrial Recovery Act and thus brought an end to the "First New Deal," the effort, essentially, to pull us out of the Depression through a host of business-government collaborations incorporating minimal, usually paternal, and often token, protections for the working class.

My generation grew up under the aegis of the "Second New Deal" and its premise that recovery and prosperity depended upon the ability of ordinary people to contest for the fruits of capitalism on a more equal footing with the captains of industry and finance. A key part of that premise was that we had to have a social safety net—unemployment insurance, aid to dependent children, old-age pensions, and so on—if we were to sustain ourselves as a countervailing force to capital.

That social safety net, enriched and expanded over the years, became our

PROFESSIONAL STAFF CONGRESS/CUNY

Defending the Social Safety Net:  
**A Call to Action**

SOCIAL SAFETY NET WORKING GROUP  
Preserving and Extending benefits for All Generations

*The Social Safety Net Working Group has produced a booklet available in print and on the web at [psc-cuny.org/safetynetbooklet](http://psc-cuny.org/safetynetbooklet).*

endowment and the one thing that I, at least, was certain would pass on through generations to come. That I could wake up one morning to find the safety net under attack, unraveling, and its political assumptions no longer a matter of consensus was, to me, inconceivable. But here we are. The Right has seized upon the current economic crisis to deny, so far successfully, the justice of the undeniably just.

**Defending the Safety Net.** What are we to do? First, I think we have to inform ourselves about what the safety net is, whom it protects, where it comes from, why and how and for how long it's been under attack, and who is mounting that attack. And then we need to share ideas about how to fight back. Your chapter began this process by forming the Social Safety Net Working Group, which has produced a booklet on the safety net crisis, has been making educational visits to campus chapters, and organized the recent forum, "Call to Action: Defending the Social Safety Net" at SEIU 1199. This last was an effort to reach beyond our own union, seeking allies among other labor and community organizations.

Next, we need to reach across generations. Students on the campuses, of course, are the most accessible. But we've got to cast a wider net. Let's keep our eyes on this extraordinary phenomenon, Occupy Wall Street. Their repeated cry, "We are the 99%!" is the kind of unifying slogan that helps transcend the parochial, self-absorbed efforts that have held us back. And they fix on the right target: Wall Street, the people Teddy Roosevelt called the "malefactors of great wealth."

No, Occupy Wall Street doesn't have a single media-friendly demand. But that may be a source of strength, not weakness. It suggests a withdrawal of consent, a refusal to collaborate, and an implicit

statement that the system is rigged; that the notion of "shared sacrifice" is a mug's game that only victimizes the most vulnerable. Its very generality and disruptiveness compels the establishment to come up with concrete, meaningful proposals. Its momentum is, at least for now, awesome, and its inclusiveness, seductive.



Yes, as retirees we have particular concerns. Indeed, precisely because we have such concerns we need to build the cross-sectoral, cross-generational power that can achieve what we want. Let's stay open to the possibilities that Occupy Wall Street represents. What do you think?

Here are two websites that contain more information about issues confronting us today.

[http://read.bi/why\\_we\\_are-mad](http://read.bi/why_we_are-mad) (charts about income inequality)

<http://occupywallst.org/> (Occupy Wall Street's website)

**III. STATE OF THE UNION.** In the absence of PSC President Barbara Bowen, Vice-President Steve London provided the traditional "State of the Union Address" to open our October meeting. The summary

below has been prepared by the Chapter's Vice-Chairman, Joel Berger.

Calling for active participation of the Retiree Chapter, Steve London, First Vice President of the PSC, outlined how retirees "can hook into the broad based agenda" of the union. The challenge is to build "an anti-corporate people's movement" and "to keep CUNY as a central focus, so that CUNY is promoted as an engine of equality."

#### RENEW THE MILLIONAIRES TAX SURCHARGE!



Governor Cuomo has vowed that the tax surcharge on NY's richest should sunset on December 31st -- a move that will deprive the state of \$5 billion a year in revenue & result in more cutbacks.

The major economic crisis of today has caused a shift away from Keynesian economics toward austerity policies world wide with tremendous social upheaval as a result. "All of this is spurred on by the huge inequalities which exist within our society." The PSC must:

1. Protect the memberships' gains that we have won over the years, and to advance them, wherever possible.
2. Intervene and help build the "fightback" against austerity policies and corporate power.
3. Make CUNY an engine of equality.

In terms of the first goal, the PSC is confronting a "very difficult bargaining environment." At the State level, the CSEA has already accepted a contract with three years of no increases, mandatory furloughs, and increased worker contributions for health care. The leadership of PEF accepted a similar contract, but the membership rejected it. Governor Cuomo, in turn, is implementing layoffs for PEF members. "At the very same time, of

course, the Governor did not support the extension of the millionaires tax." That tax would raise an additional 5 billion dollars annually in the budget - far exceeding the amount saved by layoffs.

"The union's position is that we are in no hurry to go to the bargaining table "for immediately, concessions would be demanded. However, even though the contract has expired, the Triborough Amendment preserves continuity of salary step increments and maintains health insurance benefits. The PSC, along with other unions, protected the membership by defeating an attempt last year by Governor Cuomo to unilaterally impose furloughs.

A major problem confronting the PSC and CUNY is the issue of adjunct health care. Since 2003, CUNY's contribution to the PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund for adjunct health insurance has remained unchanged, regardless of the number of eligible adjuncts or the cost of the insurance per individual. Meanwhile, both the number of participating adjuncts and the amount charged by health insurance companies have skyrocketed, resulting in a total cost increase of 400%.



CUNY's chronic underfunding of the Welfare Fund has finally led to a crisis where in hundreds of CUNY's adjunct faculty stand to lose access to health insurance, if the university fails to act.

The union's all-out campaign to demand funding for adjunct health insurance is working. At the recent CUNY Trustees meeting, with 500+ PSC demonstrators looking on, Chancellor Goldstein announced that money for adjunct health care will be included in next year's CUNY budget request. But there is much more to do to make that funding a reality.

"Another area where we are under attack is in governance." The unilateral top-down imposition of new general education requirements (dubbed "Pathways" by the administration) and the wholesale rewriting of the University Bylaws both encroach on the rights of faculty and professional staff. The Union has successfully pressed for a delay of the vote to enact the new Bylaws, and changes to address some of our concerns are being made. In terms of the general education requirement, the PSC will be filing a lawsuit arguing that the faculty has control over course content under the Bylaws.

Looking at the second goal, the union is intervening and helping to build the "fightback" against austerity policies. The first step is to organize and educate our own members, as the Retiree Chapter has done through its Social Safety Net Committee. A second area of activity is to build support within the labor movement for the extension of the state's so-called "millionaires tax." Building coalitions with other activist groups is a third way to promote the struggle against austerity policies. The Occupy Wall Street movement is highlighting income inequalities in the country, and helping to set a framework for continued activism. The PSC participated in the October 5<sup>th</sup> labor solidarity march in support of the movement. Finally, the PSC must keep CUNY as a central focus within all of these efforts. Retirees "have been a mainstay and backbone of our political action," and a "tremendous resource and reservoir of support" in all of PSC's activities. The

current situation calls for heightened energy and activism.

#### **IV. TIAA-CREF COMMITTEE MEETING .**

At the conclusion of the regular meeting, the Chapter's TIAA sub-committee held a separate session for TIAA members. The summary was prepared by Judith Bronfman, co-chair of the sub-committee.

Ray Schmierer, the director of TIAA-CREF's field consulting group, and Rich Filingeri, the managing consultant for institutional relationships, made a presentation to the committee based on questions that had been collected over the past year. Those questions principally involved taxes, minimum distribution options, and eligibility for NYC health benefits. Following the formal presentation, Ray and Rich answered questions from the group. The session was warmly received and greatly appreciated.

#### **V. MARY BRYCE JENNINGS.**



We regret to report the death of Mary Bryce Jennings, the Secretary of the Retiree Chapter.

*This notice was prepared by Executive Committee member, Peter Jonas, a long-time colleague of Mary Jennings.*

Mary was a long time activist on behalf of our students, QCC, the University, and its staff. Early in her career, as an admission officer at Queensborough Community College, she worked with the University's Registrars and Admissions Officers to ease the paperwork burden of students and make working life more appropriate for CUNY professionals. When the PSC was created, she joined, seeing this as another path to improve lives and working conditions at CUNY. She was an early proponent of Registrars and Admissions Officers salary schedule parity with those of those of Professors and Higher Education Officers; a battle that the PSC won in 1979. Her efforts continued through the years. Need people to help lobby Albany politicians? Mary would be there. Need help calling members? Mary would be there.

Her contributions to the union continued after she retired in 1995. An active member of the Retirees Chapter, she was elected Secretary of the Chapter in 2001, and as a delegate to NYSUT representing Retiree Election Districts 37-38 in 2002. She remained active in these roles, even after being diagnosed with cancer, more than fifteen years ago.



On left, a picture of Mary at CUNY central administration headquarters in January 2004 in a protest against contract violations at the NYC College of Technology. (from *Clarion* 3-04)

Mary was always there for the PSC; having elected positions was only a small part of her PSC role.

As PSC President Barbara Bowen said: "Mary is irreplaceable. Even as she became increasingly frail, she continued to show up at every union action - always full of interest in everyone else's life and needs, beautiful and fearless in a pillbox hat or leopard-print coat." (This Week in the PSC, 10/12/11).

Trained as a dancer in her youth, Mary maintained a lifelong interest in the performing arts. An avid operagoer, Mary attended many opening nights, loving the atmosphere and flowing champagne. She was unique.

**VI. JUNE LUNCHEON:** Luncheon Committee Co-chair Judith Bronfman has been informed that John Jay College is in the process of changing the catering service for its cafeteria and college events. The new firm takes over on November 1. It is at that time that the PSC will begin to make further arrangements for the Luncheon. Watch for further details.

**VII. FLORIDIANS TAKE NOTICE:** The Florida Breakfast Seminar will be held on February 6, 2012 at the Lakeside Terrace (part of the Hilton Hotel) off Glades Road in Boca Raton. This is the same venue as last year.

**VI. FLU SEASON.** Executive Committee Member Ezra Seltzer is always concerned about our safety and health. He, therefore, urges everyone to take a "flu" shot for the coming season.

#### **Actions for You to Take This Flu Season**

For older adults, the seasonal flu can be very serious, even deadly. Each year in the U.S., deaths from flu-related causes range from 3,300 to 48,600 (average of 23,600), and more than 200,000 are hospitalized from serious flu complications. **Ninety percent of flu-related deaths and more than half of flu-related hospitalizations occur in people age 65 and older.**

**1. Get Your Flu Shot.** The CDC recommends getting the vaccine as soon as it becomes available in your community; it takes the body about two weeks to build up immunity. The immunity will last throughout the entire flu season.

You should get vaccinated this year even if you received a 2009 H1N1 or a seasonal vaccine last year because the vaccine viruses have been updated.

This season, people 65 years and older will have two flu shots to choose from: a regular dose flu vaccine and [a new flu vaccine designed specifically for people 65 and older with a higher dose](#). Both vaccines will protect against the same three flu viruses. Talk to your doctor about the best option for you.

If you have Medicare Part B health insurance, there is no cost to you for the flu shot if the doctor accepts assignment for giving the shot.

The flu vaccine is safe and effective, and because [the influenza viruses](#) in the flu shot are inactive, **you can't get influenza from the vaccine.**

**2. Take Everyday Preventive Actions.**

Avoid people who are sick with the flu.

- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes.
- Wash your hands often

**3. Seek Medical Advice Quickly if You Develop Flu Symptoms.**

If you develop flu symptoms, you might need medical evaluation or treatment with antiviral drugs. It's very important that antiviral drugs be administered early to treat flu in people who are very sick with flu (i.e. people who are sick enough to warrant hospitalization). For people over age 65 and others who have a greater chance of getting serious flu complications it's also important that antiviral drugs be administered early.

Flu symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people may also have vomiting and diarrhea. People may be infected with the flu and have respiratory symptoms without a fever.

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**Only if you have not already done so, please print your information on the form below. Complete it and send to:**

Professional Staff Congress  
Attn: Membership Department  
61 Broadway, 15th floor  
New York, NY 10006

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Middle Initial: \_\_\_\_ Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Street: \_\_\_\_\_  
Town/city: \_\_\_\_\_  
State and Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
College that employed you: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date of retirement: \_\_\_\_\_