



the union news



the newsletter of GSEU and Local 2110/UAW

GSEU IN ACTION

Union Protests at President Bollinger's Inauguration

On Thursday, October 3, Columbia welcomed a new university president, Lee Bollinger, a free speech advocate and former president of the University of Michigan. Nearly one hundred GSEU/UAW members handed out flyers outside the front gates in protest of Columbia's refusal to count the ballots from last March's union election. GSEU members also attended the open ceremony, where they held signs that read "Union Now."

President Bollinger has stated publicly that he "doesn't have any intention of dropping the appeal," or allowing our votes to be counted.



GSEU members exercised the right to free expression at President Bollinger's inauguration

At the inauguration, his administration took another unfortunate position, when members of GSEU were prevented from holding up "Union Now" signs in silent protest. The signs were confiscated, and some protesters were threatened with "Dean's disciplinary action."

Lee Bollinger comes to Columbia having made his reputation as a scholar of the first amendment and a defender of affirmative action. As University President, he has an opportunity to stake out the only position consistent with that reputation: **he can agree to count the ballots in our union election without further delay.**

More photos inside...

Faculty Union Victory In Tennessee

Employees petition for a union election. The university demands hearings, arguing the employees shouldn't have the right to a union. The employees win the hearings, and hold a union election. The new college president announces that he will continue to fight the union at all costs.

This scenario sounds familiar to graduate employees at Columbia, as we continue to wait out the university's appeal of our unionization effort.

It sounds familiar as well to teachers at LeMoyne-Owen College, a historically black school in Tennessee. When they decided to petition for a union election last spring, the LeMoyne-Owen employees learned that their college, like Columbia, was

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NLRB Appointments Confirmed

On November 14, the Senate confirmed President Bush's appointments to the National Labor Relations Board, signaling that a decision on Columbia's appeal could be forthcoming. The new NLRB, now led by conservative Republicans, could shift their emphasis to a less labor-friendly stance.

UAW Members March in Washington, DC



Photos Courtesy Matthieu Leimsgruber

On Saturday, October 25, some GSEU members joined other UAW members from the New York City area at the march on Washington, to protest the rush to war with Iraq.

Organizers estimated that 150,000 protesters attended the event.

More photos inside...

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More photos from the anti-war march on Washington...



GSEU members stood outside the gates in silent protest (left). Some GSEUers donned rat costumes (below), representing the anti-union administration.

...and from the GSEU protest at Bollinger's inauguration.



Washington, DC photos courtesy Matthieu Leimgruber



GSEU members held signs in Low Plaza during President Bollinger's speech

Grievance Procedure or Kangaroo Court?

The grievance procedure is one of the most important parts of any union contract. But if you haven't worked in a union workplace, you may not know exactly what a grievance procedure really is.

A glance at the union contract for graduate employees at New York University shows us why a grievance procedure matters.

Having a union contract is like having a constitution. With a contract, we get to vote on the rules and "laws" that govern our lives in the workplace. The

grievance procedure is what we use to enforce the contract. Think of it as similar to the legal system: If our laws or our constitutional rights are violated, we can go to court. If our contractual rights are violated, with a union we can turn to the grievance procedure.

Using the grievance procedure—like using the legal system—is optional. If there are other ways to settle issues—such as late checks, canceled job appointments, discrimination, or other workplace concerns, employees are perfectly

free to use them. If not, we can turn to "shop stewards"—student employees elected by their fellow students—for help. We can then appeal to union staff members and even union lawyers to represent us before University personnel, or in arbitration with an outside, neutral hearings officer.

For instance, in the contract that they ratified last February, NYU's graduate employees bargained a clause saying that any rights and privileges that had existed prior to the contract were covered—even if they weren't

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Petition for Free Speech at Yale

This past September, two Yale graduate students and six clerical staff were arrested for union organizing outside the Yale-New Haven Hospital where they work.

Graduate students Rosa De Filippis (GRD '02) and Fran Balamuth (MED '03), along with six Yale clerical staff workers, were charged with criminal trespassing for distributing pro-union flyers outside two hospital entrances.

Yale's Graduate Employee Student Organization (GESO), affiliated with the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees union (HERE), has

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Meet Your *Real* BOSSES:

A Look at Columbia's Board of Trustees

A quick inspection of Columbia's trustees dispels the notion that the university is simply dedicated to the selfless pursuit of knowledge. As the biographies of the trustees reveal, it's also a major business enterprise, operated and led like one. Currently, Columbia is run by 20 trustees who are charged with the overall governance of the university: approving the budget, managing the endowment and other properties, overseeing faculty and administrative appointments, and determining the course of study offered by the university. With such sweeping powers, one might expect that the trustees would occupy a visible presence on campus, making pronouncements and participating in events with professors and students. We know, of course, that they don't.

In part, this is because trustees are not subject to any direct oversight, and so they don't have to be in conversation with the broader university community. Board members are chosen by their predecessors, and their quarterly meetings are held in undisclosed locations.

Trustees, however, are also busy people. Because their service for Columbia is unpaid, they have to earn a living by day. And quite a living it is!

Besides Columbia President Lee Bollinger (who serves as a trustee by virtue of his presidency):

- Seven trustees are bankers;
- Five are senior executives in other corporations;
- Two are partners at law firms;
- Only four are employed in public service or at non-profit organizations;
- And only one --Clyde Wu, an associate professor of medicine at Wayne State-- is a professional educator!

We can only guess at their income but we can safely assume that David Stern (chair of the trustees as well as the commissioner of the NBA), John Chalsty (until recently chairman of Donaldson, Lufkin

& Jenrette, a major investment bank), and Philip Milstein (president of Emigrant Savings Bank), among others, are not lacking for creature comforts.

Without a doubt, this cross-section of America's power elite has influence, wealth, and intelligence. But are they right for the job of running our university? Certainly they do not reflect the demographics of the school's employees, students, and faculty:

- Although women are a majority of Columbia's students, only four of the 20 trustees are female.
- People of color comprise most of Columbia's union employees, but make up only one quarter of the trustees.
- While 14 trustees have either a law or business degree, only one has a Ph.D.

Even if they seem an odd bunch to be running Columbia, are the trustees at least upstanding citizens dedicated to the highest ideals? Some are, like Harold Varmus, a Nobel prizewinner in medicine and the president of Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center. Others have somewhat more tarnished backgrounds.

- David Stern's NBA peddles clothing and products produced in sweatshops.
- Robert Kraft is heavily invested in International Forest Products, a logging and saw milling company that has been accused of environmental abuses.
- Michael Patterson is vice chairman of J.P. Morgan Chase, which has become one of the largest predatory lenders in America, denying African-Americans and Latinos access to conventional credit.

Overwhelmingly, Columbia's trustees are businesspeople, as interested and experienced in making a buck as in educating future scholars. So when Columbia says that unions are OK for business and industry, but not for universities, it seems fair to ask what, exactly, is the difference.



Faculty Union, from front page

willing to spend a small fortune to prevent it. And when they won a regional National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) decision authorizing an election, the college promptly appealed.

Unlike Columbia's teaching and research assistants, though, the LeMoyne-Owen employees recently learned the results of their election: 44-4 in favor of unionization. And there's one other difference as well: The teachers petitioning for union representation at LeMoyne are not students; they are members of the faculty.

In little-noticed but potentially far-reaching decisions this past fall, the regional NLRB in

Memphis rejected the LeMoyne administration's appeal of the faculty union. If upheld at the federal level, this decision could reverse the precedent, set more than a decade ago during a unionization effort at New York's Yeshiva University, that faculty members at private universities do not possess the legal right to unionize. The Yeshiva decision was based on the premise that faculty members are managers, not employees, and therefore should not be able to form unions. Last summer, the regional NLRB ruled that LeMoyne professors "neither possess absolute control over any facet of the school's operations nor effectively recom-

mend policies affecting its administration"-in other words, that they are employees, not managers. When the administration filed an appeal after the successful election, the regional NLRB refused to hear it.

In many ways, the union effort at LeMoyne has been an attempt to preserve the historical or at least theoretical-right of faculty to a voice in college governance. The campaign began two years ago, after the LeMoyne administration announced unilateral cuts in staff and services without so much as a query to the faculty. "Our goals have not been faculty-centered. They've been college-centered," Cheryl Golden, a psychology professor and presi-

dent of the LeMoyne-Owen Faculty Organization, recently told the Chronicle of Higher Education. "We wanted to make sure we had a say in the future of the college."

Despite the union victory, however, the future of the college—and of the faculty union—remains a matter of contest. The college has vowed not to bargain with faculty, suggesting it would rather break the law and be sued by the federal government. "We will continue to oppose it and follow the advice of our attorney and go to court if that's what's necessary," LeMoyne president James Wingate told a local paper.

Grievance Procedure? from inside

expressly stated in the new contract.

Prior to the contract, teaching assistants in the Spanish department and the Expository Writing Program had customarily been paid an additional \$1000 a semester for taking on extra responsibilities like mentoring undergraduate students. But after the contract, their departments cited the contract's overall raises, and refused to pay the extra money for the extra work.

Since the departmental decision violated the contract guarantee to continue existing benefits, the union filed a grievance on behalf of all the teaching assistants in Spanish and Expository Writing. After meeting with the university's labor representatives to discuss the contract, NYU agreed to keep paying the TAs the extra \$1000 for extra work.

At Columbia, if a grad student has a problem, the only recourse is to appeal to the "ombudsperson", a Columbia administrator who is chosen and paid by the university. Without a union, we have no elected representatives or trained union staff to assist in a grievance, and no recourse to a genuinely neutral arbitrator.

Recently, Columbia's administration created a new "policy" to handle grievances. If an individual's written complaint is accepted as worthy of review by a committee chosen by the Dean in consultation with GSAC, the issue is brought before a "grievance committee." The grievance committee consists of three faculty members nominated by the Graduate School Executive Committee, three graduate students nominated by GSAC and the Dean. The grievant may select

an "advocate" to attend the meeting, but that person may not "pose questions or intervene in the proceedings." The advocate is also "not privy to deliberations and does not vote." Once the committee rules on the grievance, the individual's only recourse is to appeal to the Dean in writing, and the policy explicitly states—several times—that "the decision of the Dean is final."

The parameters of the grievance policy are further outlined in the University Bulletin: "The University reserves the right to depart without notice from the terms of this bulletin," it reads. "The bulletin is not intended to be and should not be regarded as a contract between the University and any student or other person."

We understand. That's why we want a grievance procedure—and a real union contract.

Yale Petition, from inside

been campaigning for a graduate union for over ten years.

This is the latest incident in a long anti-union campaign on the part of Yale's administration, which has continually fought to suppress the distribution of pro-union literature on campus. According to GESO chairwoman Anita Seth (GRD '05), "there's a crisis of free speech and free association at the University."

Last month, the National Labor Relations Board issued a complaint against the Yale-New Haven Hospital for "interfering with, restraining and coercing" employees interested in organizing a union.

An on-line petition has been circulating nationwide, urging Yale President Richard Levin to drop the criminal charges against the graduate students and clerical staff. To view the petition and sign on, visit www.PetitionOnline.com/yale/petition.html

If you would like to find out more about Graduate Student Employees United (GSEU/UAW), or to get involved, please call our office at (212) 749-6703, or email us at TOP2110@2110uaw.org. You can also visit our website at www.2110uaw.org/gseu.

