

Enough is Enough

Honor and trust are two important qualities that must exist between parties negotiating collective bargaining agreements. We mention this because it appears that since last February, when negotiations began on our contract extension, this union has incorrectly assumed that the other side was honorable and trustworthy.

On Friday, November 9, we received a call from Dan McCray, County Executive Tom Suozzi's Director of Labor Relations, informing us that Mr. Suozzi would not be signing our contract extension because it failed to include medical concessions the county wanted from all unions that the College did not pursue. It appears that the College failed to adequately communicate with the County during the negotiation process. On November 20, despite attempts by the NCCFT Executive Committee and NYSUT political representatives to reason with Mr. Suozzi, he telephoned us to reiterate his position. We mentioned, to no avail, that seeking common concessions from unions ("pattern bargaining") was illegal. His position remained unchanged.

Before we indicate to you what direction the union will take, let us chronologically review the sequence of events that have led to this point in time:

"February 2007 - The college President reaches out to the Union with the concept of a contract extension.

"March/April 2007 - A series of negotiating sessions take place to reach an agreement.

"May 2007 - A series of open meetings is scheduled by the union to explain the terms and conditions of the extension. Union membership ratifies the agreement.

"May 24, 2007 - Dr. Fanelli and Union President Fran Hilliard sign the Memorandum of Agreement.

"June 22, 2007 - Union Executive Committee meets with Dan McCray, the County Director of Labor Relations, when we learn that the County, responding to Comptroller Howard Weitzman's desire to seek medical concessions from all unions, has objections to the agreement.

"June 28, 2007 - College Board of Trustees removes the contract extension from their agenda.

"September 6, 2007 - Executive Committee meets with Board of Trustees to urge their passage of the contract extension.

"September 11, 2007 - Board of Trustees approves the contract extension.

"November 9 and 20, 2007 - Both Mr. McCray and County Executive Suozzi indicate that Mr. Suozzi will not sign the extension without medical concessions. They inform us that they will be seeking the same concessions from all the unions ("pattern bargaining").

Our joint employer who failed to communicate, now is asking us to renegotiate the agreed upon contract extension. This is the same joint employer whose college component was just granted a pay increase (4½ %) for its 52 administrators and whose county component is seeking a preposterous pay increase (60%) for its County Executive and Legislators.

Most certainly, when this process began last February, the intentions of the college and the

union were honorable and some might say that casting blame for its lack of success is counter-productive. However, we would be remiss if we did not convey our disappointment with the College's failure to deliver its end of the bargain and convince the County (specifically, Mr. Suozzi) of the merits of the contract extension. Furthermore, the County Executive's intransigent position will only increase our resolve at the bargaining table. Most certainly, when full-scale negotiations begin, we will insist that both joint employers (College and County) be present at all sessions to avoid a repeat of this travesty.

Now that the contract extension is no longer viable, where do we go from here?

- 1.The domestic partner issue will become a priority, mutually exclusive of the negotiation process.
- 2.The Crisis Committee will convene and begin preparations for negotiations.
- 3.Every member of the bargaining unit will be sent a survey asking for their input for our negotiating package.
- 4.Executive Committee members will be available to all Academic Departments to hear their concerns.
- 5.Elections will be held for the two negotiators-at-large (one classroom and one non-classroom) who will be part of the negotiating team.

We certainly will be well prepared to negotiate a fair and equitable contract. We have learned a good lesson these past nine months. The resolve of the union leadership has been tested; the resolve of the entire bargaining unit will be tested in the future.

In solidarity,
NCCFT Executive Committee
December 4, 2007