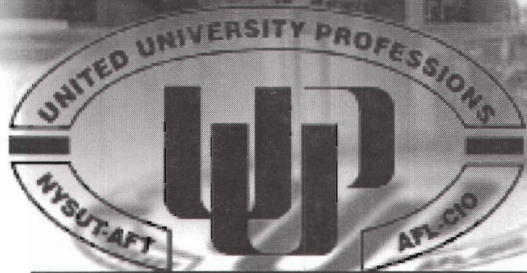


# INSIGHT



NEWSLETTER OF THE STONY BROOK CHAPTER  
OF UNITED UNIVERSITY PROFESSIONS

ISSUE # 6

May 00

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The Chapter office will be open daily from 9:00 to 3:00 Monday through Friday. The Executive Board meets on Alternate Thursdays at 12 noon, and members are encouraged to attend.

## *A message from* **John P. Schmidt** **Chapter President**

## **WHY UNIONS MATTER**

I commit to your reading list the above subject book title authored by Michael D. Yates. If your backlog of reading is like mine, perhaps you will appreciate my attempt at capturing the spirit and intent of Mr. Yates' effort. Alternatively, if you have ever wondered why you are paying dues to a union of faculty and professional staff, I am happy to provide a frame or two for reference.

When people ask you "Who do you work for", how do you respond? Stony Brook? SUNY? The State of New York? The department of XYZ? What is it that informs your response? Your pride in the work unit? Your solidarity with faculty and professionals? Your personal perspective?

Since none of us work for ourselves, our effort is defined as part of the general workforce in New York State higher education. Group reference is the core of union identity and strength. The group has more power in the eyes of the employer. The group has greater power to implement change. Group identity helps meet and deal with frustration in the workplace. The catalyst for group dynamics is the union membership, not a select group of interested individuals but the entire membership. How often does individual action, however motivated, succeed in influencing management? How often does management listen to one voice?

Stony Brook, like other campuses in the SUNY system operates in an organizational hierarchy. Direction and support result from intervention and/or mandate from a number of individuals and groups. The list includes the State of New York (Governor and legislature), the Board of Trustees, the College Council, the University administration, the divisional Deans and the Department Chairs. Each provides or attempts to provide some degree of oversight (some more than others) over our working lives. Where does one turn for assistance and/or intervention when these groups or individuals cease to listen or become obtrusive?

Prior to unionization, faculty/professional staff appointment letters contained official wording that the appointment was "at pleasure". This was usually construed to mean the university President, but realistically anyone in the oversight hierarchy was similarly empowered to void the appointment. Working "at pleasure" meant no recourse to low wages, restrictive benefits or arbitrary and capricious acts by management. It was a take it or leave it proposition with no system of checks and balances.

Even with official recognition, the union's role is constantly challenged by distorted messages (intentional and unintentional). Management too often provides the message that the unit/work place would be better off without the union. For management that is certainly true. You then have absolute control over all aspects of production and output, no accountability and no demands for reasonable wages and benefits. The media, consumed with negative reporting anyway, always seems to present a less flattering picture of the why and how of a union/management confrontation oftentimes at the expense of the union image. As one example of media distortion, strike threats are universally portrayed as a union creation of a public inconvenience. The real issues and the union's attempts to head off the confrontation seldom receive objective treatment over the news wire.

*Continued on Page Two*

*Continued from page One...*

In reality, wages and benefits under a union shop far outpace the wages and benefits under a nonunion shop. For 1995, Yates reports the following quantitative measures of union/nonunion environments:

	<u>Wages</u>	<u>Insurance</u>	<u>Pension</u>
Union	\$ 16.69	\$ 2.24	\$ 1.15
Nonunion	13.35	.98	.42

In an earlier newsletter message I speculated as to what kind of contract SUNY faculty and professional staff might have garnered if our union numbers were more active (that is, visibly active). Wage levels, as one measure, are determined more by power standing than market determination. SUNY faculty and professional staff have vast potential that can be realized via union solidarity. The alternative is a quiet acceptance of cost of living increases and other modest gains which management can easily afford.

In the qualitative sense, your union (and hopefully, you) stands for the following labor centered principles:

- 1 meaningful work
- 2 democratic control of production
- 3 shorter hours of work
- 4 an end to discrimination
- 5 wage and income equality

For any of this to happen, effective involvement of committed members is a co-requisite. Your union office, its officers and delegates stand ready to assist. Drop in, call or e-mail. **In unity there is strength.**

In solidarity!

#### NAFTA:

#### A Visit to the Mexican border factories

*By Judith Wishnia*

*UUP Delegate & Assoc. Professor,  
Interdisciplinary Social Sciences*

Despite protests from the AFL-CIO, NAFTA (North America Free Trade Agreement) was passed by Congress in 1994. There had been a free trade zone on the Mexican/U.S. border for thirty years but NAFTA was supposed to bring even more jobs and prosperity to the entire North American continent as manufactured goods would be bought by all these newly employed workers. The reality is that workers in all three countries



have seen a decline in their standard of living. Recently, I joined nine other members of the New York Labor/Religion Coalition on a visit to two Mexican cities with large numbers of NAFTA factories. Matamoros is just across the Rio Grande from Brownsville, Texas and Valle Hermosa is approximately forty miles south of the border.

In Matamoros, most of the factories make electronic parts for companies like SONY and automobile parts that used to be made in cities like Flint or Saginaw, Michigan: steering wheels, dashboards, airbags, windshields and windshield wipers—all to become part of GM and Ford cars “made in the USA”. In the U.S., these plants were once unionized paying good wages and benefits.

We met with some of the workers to discuss their working conditions—a brave gesture since many workers, fearful of being fired, hesitated to speak to us. Mexican labor laws are very strong on the books, mandating such benefits as medical coverage and severance pay. But the laws are not always obeyed. When the Mexican National Union complained about infractions, the Mexican government conveniently created a new union. The union now signs contracts even before the workers are hired and they are gradually phasing out the forty hour week; many maquiladoras now work a forty-eight hour, six day week. Previously, Mexican law gave workers the right to strike when there was no agreement on a contract. Now strikes do not have union support and are considered illegal. So workers find themselves battling a powerful combination: government, industry and union.

In Valle Hermosa we visited a clothing factory whose owners had abandoned the sewing machines and the factory building overnight, leaving 120 workers with neither their last weeks of pay nor their severance pay. Abandoned by the “union”, the workers

took possession of the factory and were trying to sell the machines to recoup some of their salaries. The weekend we were there the women workers learned that the court had awarded the machines to the union. The workers will not see their money.

Pay is indeed very low: 4 to 5 dollars a day or between thirty and forty-five dollars a week in most factories, less for women working in the garment industries. Before NAFTA, the border factories paid equivalent workers \$13 dollars a day. After paying for transportation (the maquiladoras are often far from the workers' residences), union dues and for necessities like water, there is little left over for food and nothing left of anything else. With barely \$20 to spend on food for the week for the entire family, most workers live on rice, beans and tortillas: no milk, no fruit and certainly no meat for the children.

Health and safety regulations are also disregarded: Congress had conveniently eliminated the health and environmental provisions from the treaty. We spoke with workers who were working without masks and gloves, had developed rashes, headaches and eye problems from breathing chemical fumes. Those working with glues and solvents report liver and kidney problems as well. Most distressing was the growing incidence of miscarriages and birth defects. Thirteen percent of babies born to factory workers have some sort of defect: there has been a big increase in cases of hydrocephaly, spina bifida and respiratory failure among these infants. And of course, polluted water from the factories runs into the streams and rivers: the brackish green water then flows into the nearby Gulf of Mexico.

But most shocking of all were the “colonia”, the “hoovervilles” built by maquiladora workers. Desperate for housing and lacking funds, workers and their families have settled on abandoned garbage dumps. There is no water and no electricity. It should be noted that these impoverished colonia also exist on the Texas/California side of the border, another indication that NAFTA helps the workers of neither country.

Is there any hope for these victims



of greed? Two of the colonias we visited had elected women as chairs of the community and these women have organized the community to clean up the garbage, to escort women workers from the bus stop at night to prevent rapes. We are happy to report that our affiliate NYSUT is sending money to two communities to help them with building their one-room schoolhouses. We brought down paper, pencils and crayons since they have no supplies.

Thanks to organizations like the Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras, FUTURO (United Front of Workers for Labor Rights and CFO (Border Committee of Women Workers) workers dissatisfied with their conditions and their "company" union are organizing meetings to tell workers of their rights and how to counter the health and safety hazards. Adhering to fair labor standards would really mean that the much touted aim of NAFTA to raise the standard of living of all workers might become a reality.

There are things we can do in the United States. The Labor/Religion Coalition is helping to support two organizers, the building of schools and the various organizations seeking improvements in the Maquiladoras. Individuals are sending money and supplies through the Coalition to aid the Mexican workers. My UUP colleague, Michael Silverberg and I are committed to paying the tuition and books for two students to go to high school. UUP will be discussing what we can do as a group but if individuals want more information, you may contact Maureen Casey or Brian Shaughnessy and the New York State Labor/Religion Coalition, 159 Wolf Road, Albany, New York, 12205.

### DEFENSIVE DRIVING PROGRAM REGISTER EARLY!

**DATE:** Tuesday, May 2, 2000 and Thursday, May 4, 2000

**TIME:** 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm

**COST:** Only \$15 per person

**PLACE:** Student Activities Center, #305

**WHO:** Open to UUP members & their immediate family.

### HOW TO REGISTER...

Checks should be made payable to "NYSUT Benefit Trust"

Bring or mail to UUP Office, 104 Old Chemistry, Zip = 3475



Chapter Office, 104 Old Chemistry, SUNY at Stony Brook, Stony Brook, NY 11794-3475 (631) 632-6570



### STONY BROOK CHILD CARE Services By William Wiesner, SBCC Board Chair

Stony Brook Child Care Services Incorporated serves the children (and parents) of the Stony Brook University Community. Located on Daniel Webster Drive (on the northern part of the road that loops past the Hospital) are the weekday residences of 97 children. As one of the few accredited child care centers on Long Island we believe we are a star.

In the years since incorporation, the center has become more 'professional', better equipped, and better staffed....largely with the help of campus unions including UUP. Every year our center has qualified for grants from the Labor/Management committee UUP, CSEA, PEF, and GSEU. At the outset these were large grants that exceeded \$100,000 a year; these have been reduced dramatically in the past few years, and finally this year there are no funds. Still with the Labor/Management grant and the other grants (notably a SUNY grant) we instituted and maintain a sliding fee scale that helps keep child care affordable for almost everyone.

Increased expenses and an insistence on quality has necessitated fund raising activities for many years; we are among the most successful child care center in the country in this regard. These funds have allowed us to maintain quality and retain our staff. Our success has resulted in a long placement waiting list, especially for infants and toddlers. The pressure to accommodate more children as well as the need to modernize the facility has led the center, with the help of the campus, to start building a new facility.

Our new facility is designed to hold 160 children. On April 25 there will be a ground breaking ceremony at the site of our new building on the old Parson's property across from South P lot. The carrying costs on the new building will force us to redouble fund raising efforts. Earlier this month we had our most successful Cash Bonanza raffle netting more than \$20,000. Soon we will kick off our Building Pledge program where we hope to raise enough money to cover the cost of the new building.

To help with the pledge program, or to donate time and/or money, please call the Child Care Center office at 632-6930.

# Dear Bonnie

I am a part-time employee with a term appointment. If my appointment is going to be non-renewed, what notice must the employer give me?

### ANSWER:

If you are a part-time employee with a Term appointment, the employer is required to give you 45 days notice prior to the end of the appointment. (Article 32 of the 1999-2003 NYS/UUP Agreement).

If you have a Temporary appointment, the employer is not required to give any notice. Temporary appointments may be terminated at any time. Part-time employees with temporary appointments must receive term appointments at the end of six consecutive semesters of employment.

*(Dr. Bonnie Beck, our UUP Labor Relations Specialist, is available through the Chapter Office to discuss contractually related issues of employment. Please send questions for this newsletter to the Chapter office, 104 Old Chemistry, or via e-mail @ uup@notes.cc.sunysb.edu.)*

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**UUP  
General Membership  
Meeting  
Tuesday, May 2, 2000  
12 NOON  
Peace Center,  
Old Chemistry  
(Across the hall  
from the UUP Office)  
Lunch will be provided  
to those who RSVP  
Ext. 2-6570,  
no later than Friday, April 28.**

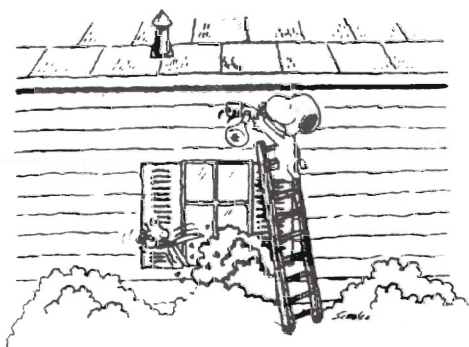
### AGENDA

- I. PRESIDENT'S REPORT
- II. VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT'S
- III. TREASURER'S REPORT
  - A. FINANCIAL STATUS - FY 99-00
  - B. PROPOSED BUDGET - FY 00-01
- IV. MEMBERS CONCERNS
- V. ADJOURNMENT  
(Approximately @ 1:30 P.M.)

# STOP a Thief in the Night

**D**etermined thieves can break into just about any home, but if you follow these tips, you can make entry a lot more difficult for them.

- **Keep doors locked at all times.** It sounds simple enough, but you'd be surprised at the number of home burglaries where intruders enter through an unlocked door, garage or patio. Install deadbolt locks because they provide the best protection for the least money.
- **Keep windows and sliding-glass doors locked.** Basement windows are a popular point of entry for intruders. You can secure a sliding-glass door with a broomstick or lumber laid across the door track when the door is closed.
- **Thieves generally target homes with poor outdoor lighting.** Outside flood lighting reduces your risk of burglary by highlighting the exterior of your home at night. Use light timers on inside and outside lights to give the impression that someone is home.
- **For greater peace of mind, invest in a professionally installed alarm system.**
- **So you have a dog?** Loudly barking dogs attract attention a burglar doesn't want.
- **Leave a radio or television set on when you're out** because the sound of voices can send an intruder elsewhere.
- **Have peepholes in all solid doors.** Don't rely on chain locks to see who is at the door, for such locks can easily be forced open once a door is ajar.



- **Keep trees and shrubbery trimmed.** Overgrown bushes give a burglar more privacy.
- **Have someone collect mail and newspapers, or have delivery stopped while you're on extended trips.**
- **Don't be predictable.**

Thieves head straight for the bedroom when they enter the house. That's where most people keep their valuables. A jewelry box is an obvious hiding place. Be creative in stashing your valuables, or keep them in a safe-deposit box.

- **Thieves look for easy-to-carry items that can be quickly converted into cash: jewelry, silver and electronic equipment.** Invest in a table/desk bolt for stereos, VCRs and computers. If it's too much of a hassle to steal, most robbers won't go to the trouble.

There's no doubt that theft can disrupt your life. By following the above steps and preparing in advance, you can help decrease your chances. Plus, you can get quality insurance for your home and property by simply calling the NYSUT Benefit Trust-endorsed METPAY™ program at 1 800 GET-MET 1 (1-800-438-6381) today. You'll speak with a knowledgeable METPAY Insurance Consultant who can answer your questions and assist you in applying for coverage through the program. What's more, if you have a home security system installed, you may qualify for a premium discount.

Call 1 800 GET-MET 1 today!

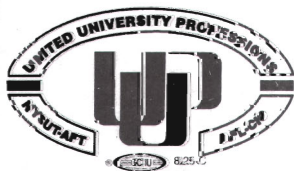
## MetLife® Auto & Home

MetLife Auto & Home is a brand of Metropolitan Property and Casualty Insurance Company and its Affiliates, Warwick, RI

METPAY, underwritten by MetLife Auto & Home, is available in most states to those who qualify. In Texas, homeowners coverage is provided by Metropolitan Lloyd's Insurance Company of Texas. In some instances, special arrangements for coverage have been made with other carriers.

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