

NORTH HARRIS COUNTY COLLEGE UNITED FACULTY

2700 W. W. THORNE DRIVE • SUITE A-217 • HOUSTON, TEXAS 77073

THE ADVOCATE

OCTOBER 1990

Edited by Steve Davis,
Joseph Minton, and
Joan Samuelson

Meeting Announcement

All South Campus faculty and staff are invited to attend an AFT meeting on Thursday, October 18, in A-261. In order to accommodate varied schedules, the AFT will meet from 11:50 to 12:30 p.m. and again from 2:00 to 2:45 p.m. Several district issues and AFT activities will be discussed. The meetings should provide non-members an opportunity to learn more about the AFT. Refreshments will be served.

Membership News

AFT member Bliss Mayberry's student, Ann Strickland, recently passed her state cosmetology exams with a score of 100, the highest score in recent memory. Congratulations to Ann and Bliss for a job well done.

President's Column

By Alan Hall

The AFT operates on several levels. Internationally, the union has helped the freedom movement in oppressed countries. Specifically, the union provided essential help to Lech Walesa and Solidarity, including money, printing equipment, and worldwide publicity. In addition, the AFT has provided assistance to fledgling teacher unions in Hungary. On the national level, AFT is heavily involved in educational reform and improving the quality of American education. In preliminary conversation between the AFT and the search firm looking for the new NHCC Chancellor, Linus Wright complimented AFT, emphasizing its role in education reform, and called AFT

"Education for Democracy — Democracy for Education"

President, Albert Shanker, "the best mind in American education today."

On the state level, AFT lobbies the legislature on various educational issues and testifies in Austin before legislative committees. The union also regularly monitors and reports on activities of the Coordinating Board.

The activities here in the NHCC District are of most interest to and probably have the most significant impact upon our members. Over the last ten years, we have represented members in grievances and job-related conflicts. We have provided legal assistance as well as representation in hearings and meetings. We encourage members not to go into a possibly confrontational meeting without an AFT representative present. The AFT has helped to save one job outright. Two members got into conflicts with supervisors and wound up with letters of reprimand in their personnel files, part of their permanent work record. The AFT believed these letters to be inappropriate and sought their removal. Therefore, we secured legal counsel for these members and negotiated removal of the letters from the files. In situations where jobs were not salvageable, we have helped to negotiate cash settlements.

The AFT's most recent efforts in this arena took place this past summer in a South Campus division. We had some members who encountered a serious conflict with a supervisor. The union provided legal advice from its attorney as well as a representative in hearings on the issue. I am pleased to report resolution of that conflict in favor of the AFT members.

The AFT has endorsed and worked for candidates for the NHCC Board of Trustees. We have helped change the nature of the Board into a group more willing to listen to a variety of opinions and consider independent decisions. We have co-sponsored with South and Kingwood Campus Faculty Senates a seminar on Board Policy, focusing on how policies affect job performance. We also singularly sponsored a panel discussion, "Thoughts on Teaching," a refreshing experience in that it brought together teachers to make positive statements about teaching, people who had actually been in a classroom in recent memory.

In another instance, the AFT worked with the administration on the problem of sound bleeding over from adjacent classes, disrupting the learning process in some cases. As a result, fourteen of the most troublesome classrooms were insulated against sound bleedover.

The AFT jumped out front on the Step 16 issue last year, raising the consciousness of everyone in the District about

the plight of people in this position. We will continue to push on this topic until the district arrives at a fair, workable, affordable plan that recognizes and rewards all of its dedicated, long-term employees. As a side note, a merit pay system is not the solution, but more on that later.

The AFT regularly publishes this newsletter, The Advocate, which addresses topics not generally covered in The Semaphore or The Triad.

Two years ago, the AFT brought to NHCC Lt. Governor Bill Hobby and State Representative Wilhelmina Delco to recognize them for their contributions and years of commitment to higher education in Texas. It is my understanding that the Gulf Coast Consortium of Community Colleges had been trying to get Hobby onto any Gulf Coast campus to no avail. The AFT made one phone call, Hobby accepted immediately, and two fine legislative leaders came to NHCC--an event that provided excellent press for NHCC. AFT has clout in Austin.

The AFT has been described by upper-level administration as a "different kind of organization." Regrettably, that label has been used by them to block AFT participation in various activities. As the union and administration continue to work toward resolving differences of opinion, I believe that this attitude of the upper administration will diminish, and AFT will increase its activities in the District. While I have never approved of their motive for calling the AFT a "different kind of organization," I have always, in fact, been proud of the designation. The AFT is a different kind of organization: our presence in the District has made a difference and will continue to make a difference. If you are not a member, we cheerfully invite you to participate.

The Worker's News

By Greg Mitchell

It has been six months since we joined the AFT. Those who said it was a flash in the pan are no longer singing that song. In the six months since we have joined, we have had no union members terminated, nor have we had to defend any members against unjust attempts at termination or any other form of punishment. In fact, the opposite is the trend: Deborah Israel has been promoted, as have Debbie Johnson, Phylliss Smith, and Anita Schiro. Patricia Plunk achieved a requested transfer and promotion, and Trudy Kinnamon gained a twelve-month position, an advance from the nine-month position previously held.

We now have members in areas previously thought to be among the most repressive of our college. There don't seem to be any more threats either of withheld promotion, or of being

required to furnish uniforms with our own funds (uniforms which are required in order to perform our duties).

We have gained other advances that are not quite so evident, as they were achieved quietly by the union without fanfare or adversity. These advances resulted from more open dialogue with some of the more enlightened and concerned administrators, and there is reason to believe that these trends will continue. We have lost a few members through attrition, but we have gained many more members than we have lost. In fact, our growth has not even peaked yet.

As the first PSRP Chapter in a college or university in Texas, our progress is being observed closely by many more than I had anticipated or imagined. In fact, we have had a union leader contacted by a group from another school to aid in forming a local in that location. In short, the news is good and will continue to improve if current trends prevail, which we have every reason to expect. After all, dignity, due process, and dialogue are not that unreasonable to demand. Yet we never let down our vigilance, and when we do have to come to the defense of one of our members, it will be no uniform battle like Hamburger Hill. It would more closely resemble Debs-Hill.

Remember to return your registration forms for the upcoming convention at Holiday Inn--Intercontinental Airport on the weekend of October 20. We will be car pooling. For more information, contact Greg at the Kingwood Campus, Ext. 698, or at home, (713) 592-1660.

Invitation to Prospective Members

If you are interested in membership, at the South Campus contact Cher Brock, X572; Mel McFadden, X558; Allen Vogt, X583; or Alan Hall, X544. At the Kingwood Campus, contact Steve Davis, X645; Greg Mitchell, X698; or Marge Brown, X606.