



EMPLOYEE FEDERATION

of

North Harris Montgomery
Community College District

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THE ADVOCATE

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Edited by Steve Davis

COMMITTEE MADNESS

In recent issues of The Advocate, the union has made clear its belief that the new administration is immeasurably better than the old. However, I am beginning to be concerned about some old, sadly familiar experiences creeping into our new relationship, specifically administrative response, or lack thereof, to the work of committees.

In this past hiring cycle--a cycle which is ridiculously late due to the budget cycle--three different committees made recommendations to administration that were rejected or ignored. In one instance, an administrator went back to a committee to explain why he was rejecting a candidate that six professionals had spent hours selecting. In another instance, a candidate for a district office position was rejected, probably with good cause as it turned out. However, no one bothered to go back to the committee to explain what happened to their recommendation. One of the concerned members had to seek out an explanation.

The third situation deserves special attention. Not only was there a rejection of a candidate, but there were serious inconsistencies for a single division hiring for three positions. The three committees received conflicting instructions regarding ranking candidates. Committees were told by a dean and the division chair to rank but later were told by the vice-president not to rank. For one position, a committee forwarded three names to the administration without ranking them. The administration interviewed all three finalists and made a selection. For another position, that committee narrowed the field to two finalists and ranked them. The administration interviewed the number one person, whom they liked so much they hired without ever interviewing the number two person. The third position is the most interesting case. That committee interviewed five candidates and ranked the top two. The number one finalist was a district faculty member who wanted to transfer. In the spring, the division chair on the hiring campus had notified the chair on the candidate's campus of the possible transfer in order to avoid placing a burden of a last-minute hire on the other chair. As the hiring committee was preparing to submit its list to the administration in July, the

"Education for Democracy — Democracy for Education"

campus president issued a memo stating that, since it was so late, no transfers would be approved from other campuses. The division chair went to the president for an explanation. The chair emphasized that the committee unanimously wanted candidate number one and was told that we needed to do what was best for the district. Arguments by the chair that transfer of the number one candidate would be best for the district apparently were not heard. The vice-president called the division chair and requested a full description of the procedure followed by the hiring committee. The chair was surprised to hear the rumors that had reached the vice-president that the correct process had not been followed. The vice-president was assured that nothing improper had occurred. Later, while the chair was out of town, the vice-president and a dean interviewed the only other finalist and by telephone notified the chair of their intention to hire this person. The number one finalist was never even interviewed. As an alternative, the chair proposed a delay in hiring for this position until the spring, which would give the other campus time to search for a replacement for finalist number one. The chair was told no, with no explanation. Interestingly, all the paperwork which traditionally is filled out by the chair on a new hire, in this instance, was filled out by someone else. No one went back to the committee to explain what had happened to their number one finalist and why. Prior practice has been that, if a faculty member wished to transfer and the division on the campus to which he desires to move approves, the transfer simply occurs, and the campus from which he leaves is responsible for finding a replacement. What happened here? Why did the president's memo come out as recommendations were made? Why all these inconsistencies and mixed signals? Why such unexplained opposition to the committee?

Outside the hiring cycle, there remains the work of the compensation committee, which made recommendations regarding the salary schedule to Dr. Pickelman in May of 1992. Rather than act hastily, the chancellor wisely chose to hold off on any decision for 1992-93 and recommended a 5% salary increase. That gave him a year to reflect on the proposal and act for the 1993-94 year. However, without a single comment on the proposal, the chancellor recommended a 3% increase for 93-94. The union recognizes that this action meets one of our goals--that no senior faculty who have topped out on the salary schedule should lose financial ground. However, this most recent action once again ignores committee input and the value of the members' time invested. The chancellor owes the committee a response, even if it is "no" with explanation.

Certainly, we recognize that every committee recommendation cannot be approved, but a rejection should be accompanied by a rationale. No recommendation should languish indefinitely--professional time is far too valuable to be ignored. Let us hope that these four examples are aberrations and not the beginning of old, familiar patterns. We've been there before.

Alan Hall

I read with interest your article, "Thoughts on Students", in the last issue of The Advocate. As an NHMCCD employee and as a parent of two public high school students and a college senior, I share your concern with the apathy and lack of motivation to succeed that seem rampant among students today, both at the K-12 levels as well as in higher education. I strongly concur with your desire to study this situation and to find methods to improve it.

It might interest you to know that Dr. Green and I have already compiled substantial data on retention, persistence, and academic success from the district perspective down to the specific subject area by college. Extensive data has been collected by various departments here at district, as well as some of your faculty colleagues at other college locations. I am enclosing one small portion of a project we completed which looked at success rate data and student demographics for the 1991-92 academic year.

We in the Office of Research and Planning would welcome your input as to how we can continue to work together towards our common goal of helping all our students succeed.

Sandra Naumann
Research Analyst
District Office

It is an interesting phenomenon that one never ceases to be a teacher, no matter what the length of time one has been separated from the profession. Because of this perpetuation of the teaching instinct, I empathize constantly with the achievements and problems experienced by teachers at all levels. So, of course, I feel the urge to respond to your "Thoughts on Students."

Your observations are certainly valid, and one is tempted to say, "Twas ever thus." Your article could have been printed thirty years ago with the same degree of validity, and your evaluation of possible causes would also apply to earlier times.

Is the problem of bright but noncommitted students more prevalent now? Perhaps--to a degree; but perhaps today's students just profess their disinterest more openly. Should teachers just adopt their own noncommitment and discard feeling of concern about their professional abilities because there will always be the unmotivated student? Not at all. As long as teachers continue to question themselves and look at the possibility of doing a better job, we will have good teaching; and here and there we will rescue a few students from the comfort of their disinterest.

Stay with it!

Fran Seagrave
Circulation Asst.
Kingwood LRC

Thanks to Sandra Naumann and Fran Seagrave for their informed and empathetic replies to my article. I also appreciate the kind remarks made by colleagues around the District. Few of my contributions to The Advocate have ever seemed to touch such a nerve. Since the end of the spring semester, I have managed to positively adjust my attitude to student performance. While the frustrations I cited in the classroom are quite real, perhaps after nine years at Kingwood College and considering other accumulated stresses, I was just due for a personal crisis of confidence regarding teaching. This semester, things are much better. I've got good students. I'm reworking my material and trying new teaching methods to help maintain their interest. But most important, I have a much healthier sense of what I can achieve. For all kinds of reasons, there will always be some students who fall short of expectations. To state this is not to despair over our abilities, but simply to acknowledge the human condition. Having done so, we teachers can still make a difference.

The Editor

BARBEQUE BROUHAHA

Surely one of the finest moments ever witnessed during an NHMCCD inservice came when the Chancellor in his recent presentation said that it was a disgrace that any fulltime employee of the District could be eligible for food stamps. The announced 3% pay hike with a minimum of \$600 will not immediately correct the situation, but at least was another step in the direction of equitable pay for staff since the lowest-paid workers received the highest percentage raises. The AFT applauds the Chancellor for expressing and acting upon these progressive sentiments.

This stance is contradicted however by the decision to charge employees to attend the District Picnic scheduled for October 10 at the H & H Ranch. Tickets must be purchased in advance at \$5 per adult and \$2 per child. Last year's event was free. Why then a change in policy that will financially disadvantage those toward the bottom of the pay scale? Indeed, several staffers have approached me on this matter, testifying that the expense of attending with their families will necessitate their absence. A District Office observer told me the rationale for selling tickets was to prevent a repeat of the previous event, in that a considerable number of folks who said they would attend did not do so and stuck the District with a considerable bill for unconsumed barbeque and trimmings.

It is understandable that some adjustment would need to be made, but this did not require charging for the one annual get-together of its kind. Why not plan for some non-attendance based upon last year's experience? Airlines regularly overbook their flights for the same reason. Within a couple of years, I'll bet we could come fairly close to anticipating the rough percentage of people making reservations who actually show up. In the meantime, if there were a surplus of food, simply let people go back through the line for

seconds or take some home for the rest of the week. If by some chance, too many people show up and the food runs out, we could always call for pizza!

I intend to be there with my family as part of a likely-diminished turnout. The \$14 cost for myself, my wife, and two kids is about what we spend on a regular excursion to Pancho's (yes, I said Pancho's). Besides, going to the picnic and hanging out with my friends beats hell out of sitting at home watching the Oilers. Still, because of the cost, not all of the people wanting to attend will be there. Let's never again forget those members of the family.

The Editor

(Editor's note: The following article comes from a recent issue of On Campus, an official publication of the AFT. Its author is Norman Swenson, president of the Cook County College Teachers Union. We hope our readers will find it interesting.)

REALITY CHECK: WHY WORSHIP THE PRESIDENT?

Why do community college employees blindly worship each new president hired by their district? The average tenure for Illinois community college presidents is four years. By contrast, faculty, nonteaching professionals and classified staff average 15 to 20 years service at their college.

Yet, when a new president is hired, he or she is immediately assumed to be the expert on all college matters and the spiritual leader of the college community. The knowledge and leadership abilities of the loyal employees who have served the college for decades are disregarded by their fellow employees, the college board, and the community.

This deference addressed to the college president may be explained cynically by the tendency of all employees to bow and scrape at the feet of their employers. But why the obsequious groveling when we have a large and powerful union to support us? Why should we refer to the college president as "Doctor Hyde" when we don't use that title when addressing our colleagues with doctorates?

Perhaps our bowing and scraping spring from the human tendency to compare our college environment to our family structure. If, as many of our college presidents claim, we are part of a college family, they can assume the patriarchal or matriarchal role as head of the family. We become the children who are expected to carry out our family tasks and may be punished if we fail in our chores.

Won't we ever learn? We can be peers and true colleagues of the administration if we insist on being treated as equals in community college education. I favor a Parliamentary form of government in which our prime minister is the first among equals. If we look for

leadership outside the ranks of the faculty or support staff, we are destined, like the Third Reich, the USSR, or Rome to inherit a Fuhrer, a Stalin, or an Emperor.

JOIN THE AFT!

If you agree with the union's stances on educational and workplace issues, then it's time for you to join the Employee Federation. No other organization or publication at NHMCCD takes our kind of independent, critical approach to District affairs. If you want that effort to continue, then show your solidarity by becoming a member. All faculty and staff are eligible. Monthly dues rates are \$20.25 for fulltime faculty, \$13.10 for fulltime staff and adjunct faculty, and \$10.00 for part-time staff. Discuss membership with Alan Hall, District President (443-5544, 353-8634); Marilyn Kron, District Staff President; or any other member (Tony Foster, Bob Locander, Mel McFadden, Greg Mitchell, Patricia Plunk, Velma Smith, Allen Vogt, Steve Davis) of the Federation executive committee.

(The following cartoon is from the Summer, 1993 issue of the Flush Rush Quarterly, P.O. Box 270525, San Diego, CA., 92198.)

THIS MODERN WORLD by TOM TOMORROW

IT'S AMERICA'S FAVORITE BLOWHARD--RUSH LIMBAUGH! WITH ALL THE WIT AND CLEVERNESS OF A MARGINALLY BRIGHT SCHOOLYARD BULLY, LIMBAUGH ENTERTAINS AN ESTIMATED 15 MILLION LISTENERS EACH DAY WITH HIS RIGHT-WING DIATRIBES...

...AND IF THE SPOTTED OWL CAN'T ADAPT TO THE PRESENCE OF HUMANS--SCREW IT!
NOW ABOUT THESE FEMINAZIS--

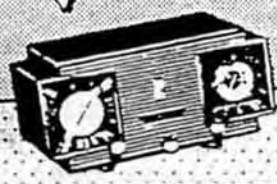
HAW! HAW!
YOU TELL 'EM, RUSH!



THOUGH THEY ARE LITTLE MORE THAN A CRANKY, OUTSPOKEN MINORITY IN A COUNTRY OF 253 MILLION PEOPLE, IT IS NONETHELESS UNSETTLING TO CONSIDER THAT 15 MILLION AMERICANS APPARENTLY AGREE WITH LIMBAUGH'S POINT OF VIEW...

HEY, RUSH-- YOU KNOW WHAT THE PROBLEM WITH THE HOMELESS IS? THEY DON'T WANT TO WORK!

ISN'T THAT THE TRUTH!



LIMBAUGH IS ON THE RADIO THREE HOURS A DAY, AND HAS A DAILY TV PROGRAM AS WELL... HE SPENDS MUCH OF THIS TIME PLUGGING HIS BOOK, UNDOUBTEDLY LEADING MANY OF HIS LISTENERS TO SET FOOT INSIDE A BOOKSTORE FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THEIR LIVES...

GOLLY, FRANK-- DID YOU KNOW THIS MANY BOOKS HAD EVER BEEN WRITTEN?

COME ON, DORIS! LET'S FIND RUSH'S BOOK AND GET OUT OF HERE!

NOW-- WHERE'S THE 'R'S'?



HE IS AN UNDENIABLY INTOLERANT MAN, THOUGH HE OFTEN DENIES THIS -- CLAIMING THAT HIS CRITICS HAVE NEVER REALLY LISTENED TO HIS PROGRAM... WELL... WE HAVE...

...AND I NEVER ACTUALLY SAID WELFARE RECIPIENTS SHOULD BE STERILIZED...

...THOUGH IT MIGHT NOT BE A BAD IDEA.

HEY TOM-- DO WE HAVE ENOUGH FOR A CARTOON YET? I'VE GOT SOMETHING I NEED TO DO.

WHAT'S THAT?

THROW UP.

