



THE ADVOCATE



Volume I Issue 5

Employee Federation of NHMCCD

April 1998

Views on Community College Faculty

The featured speaker at our last conference day was Dr. John Rouche, who is the director of and a professor in the Community College Leadership Program at the University of Texas. This leadership program falls under Education Administration within the College of Education. Rouche occupies the Sid W. Richardson Regents Chair.

I was anxious to attend the conference, for I had heard that Dr. Rouche would make a presentation that might prove provocative, one intent on stirring up, even castigating, the faculty. As it turned out, his presentation was relatively tame. Rouche certainly raised some thought-provoking issues, and he had a number of valid points to make. He is correct that political changes are underway as many states move to performance-based funding where funding is tied to outcomes, and state revenue for colleges declines. Faculty face challenges on other fronts as well. Privatizing all or portions of college education, distance learning courses offered via the internet, and baccalaureate degrees packaged by corporations, including Disney, all attest to change in higher education as we know it.

Rouche questions whether or not community college faculty are ready to meet these challenges. From his presentation at NHMCCD, it was difficult to conclude much more than he thinks "maybe not." I had heard that he often makes rather inflammatory remarks about faculty in regard to their ability to confront these issues, but there was nothing provocative here. I learned that the college had made available for checkout an audio tape of Rouche addressing a different audience on the same topic. My curiosity piqued, I listened to this presentation he had made at the Association of Community College Trustees October 1997 Conference in Dallas. It is in this arena that Rouche's more negative views toward faculty emerge.

To his credit, Rouche recognizes what many of us already know: community colleges offer students an advantage that cannot be duplicated in a canned presentation or any electronic delivery system--a human touch. He recognizes that the students who attend our colleges need that personal attention from faculty. I

was also pleased to hear Rouche insist that community college faculty maintain quality. He warns against faculty watering down courses in order not to lose students to other providers. He says, "...one of the things I worry about with community colleges is that . . . sometimes we get faculty who believe honestly that just loving these students and hugging them when they come into class, and it's ok, is all it takes. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. If you don't require a lot, demand a lot, insist upon a lot, and not put up with anything else, you will never achieve the quality and the excellence that all of these pressures are going to require . . ."

Outside these comments, Rouche's view of faculty begins to pale. He says, ". . . I know faculty better than anybody who lives," but as I listened to his comments, I began to wonder if he knows the faculty I know. He also comments, ". . . believe me, I'm not anti-faculty. I am faculty . . ." I'm not so sure he is faculty in the same way we are faculty. I also wondered why he felt the need to make this claim that he is not anti-faculty and came to see that one might conclude that he is, in fact, just so after listening to other remarks he makes to his audience, which includes trustees and college presidents.

I have divided Rouche's more enlightening" comments into three categories and have taken the privilege of editorializing on some of them.

Faculty Are Resistant to Change

" . . . faculty make Catholic priests look like wild-eyed radicals in terms of change."

"My concern is that, unless we educate our faculty, and I'm talking about with workshops, with seminars, or sending them to meetings, to find out what's happening we're likely to get this rigid, dug in, 'Well, this, too, will pass, and we'll wait the storm out and Bill Clinton will get elected for a third term and we won't have to do anything.'"

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I have, in fact, met some faculty who are resistant to change. What bothers me are Rouche's blanket statements about faculty. He appears not to have seen the efforts at NHMCCD and other community colleges to address change. The changes Rouche calls for include working longer and harder, building a constituency of support for community colleges, and devoting individual, personal attention to students, developing new methods of delivering instruction in order to compete with outside providers. Most faculty are, in fact, engaged in these very activities. My experience has been that faculty are working longer and harder to meet the needs of the "new student" and devoting energy to one-on-one conferences with students. Many of us are politically active in building community college support. As you are reading this article, faculty are working on instructional delivery systems that will meet the challenges we face.

Faculty Are Out of Touch With Reality

" . . . we've really got to help faculty understand in the real world the key to their wellbeing, that is the key to future salary increases and the like, is tied to can they generate the revenue to cover those costs. You want a raise for next year? How can you and we work together to increase productivity, reduce attrition, increase graduation rates so that we generate more revenue . . . ?"

I doubt that the majority of faculty are so out of touch with reality that they fail to understand this concept.

"Faculty are more like inmates in a correctional facility than any other group because they will develop views of the world out of touch with reality because they only talk with each other."

"The core curriculum should be evaluated every three or four years---not by faculty We ought to bring in the employers, we ought to bring in those who take our students and re-think what it is that's required today for success in our society,

and I'm not just talking about technical training . . ."

Certainly, including people from outside the colleges in curriculum review has its place, especially in the technical areas. I am confident, however, that it is unwise to exclude technical faculty. Rouche goes on to say that outsiders should determine the curriculum in the humanities as well, including topics like speech and English courses. Again, I'm sure faculty would welcome comments from the community, but I'm not sure we're willing to relinquish control of the curriculum. It is, after all, an area of our expertise. I am fearful that if we allow managers and chief executive officers from business decide the curriculum many valuable courses might be deleted. Education, after all, should address the whole person---it is not just about getting a job.

Faculty Are Not Engaged in the Community College Mission

" . . . nationwide, full-time enrollment in American community colleges has been in decline for the last ten years. . . . Guess where the growth is? Evening, afternoon, weekends, distance learning. Guess where the future is---afternoon, weekend, distance learning. Guess who's going to do that work? Are you going to end up continuing to run a shadow college where the full-time faculty continue coming at nine and leaving at two, or are they going to get involved in a lot of these activities?"

Rouche recounts a story of a visiting Russian delegation looking at community colleges and American engineering schools in cooperation with the University of Texas. At a reception, the U.T. "vice-president and provost, a physicist---see, and that tells you something---asked the Russian delegation , 'How do faculty workloads in the U.S. compare with Russian faculty workloads?'" Rouche describes the leader of the Russian delegation as reluctant to answer, but when pressed he responded, " 'Jerry, in Russia faculty work.'" After the Russian's response receives general laughter from Rouche's audience of trustees and administrators, Rouche adds, "What society, what job can you get in America where you have three months in the summer off, all of December off, spring break, fall break, and then we pay our overworked faculty for sabbatical?"

"Faculty and staff at most colleges don't understand what productivity means. They don't know what effectiveness means. I say this with a great deal of respect. I am a faculty member. But history shows that what we as faculty want is we want more money for less work."

"Here we get into some positive stuff. Look at this! Half of all our workforce will retire over the next ten years. It's a terrific answer, because you've got a chance to staff . . . with people, faculty, administrators,

support staff, who really believe in what you're doing."

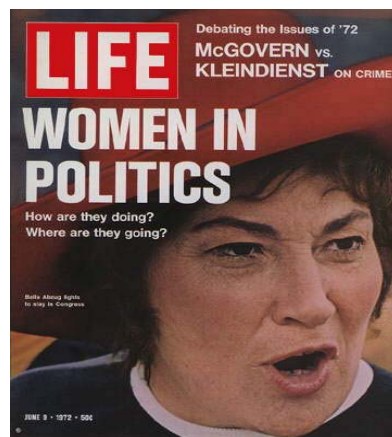
" . . .you want to hire people who understand your mission. . . . You're going to have a great opportunity to re-staff with folks who are excited and committed and want to be part of it."

Rouche never once suggests that his comments are true of a few individuals in community college teaching. He repeatedly makes broad generalizations about faculty. He characterizes us as bumbling, out of touch, lazy, and disengaged. These generalizations, of course, fly in the face of the reality that we as faculty know. We are attending conferences and seminars to stay abreast of change. We are developing new instructional approaches. We are mindful of economic challenges. We are teaching evening, afternoon, and weekend classes. For the majority of faculty, this job has never been 9:00 to 2:00. I am on the workload taskforce, a committee which came to recognize that most faculty are working fifty plus hours per week.

Rouche says , "I probably spend more time with college presidents and vice-presidents than anybody I know" In light of his "inmate" joke, I found this comment comical. Perhaps they have developed "views of the world out of touch with reality because they only talk with each other."

**Alan Hall
President**

IN MEMORY OF BELLA ABZUG



Farewell Bella

Bella S. Abzug, a wonderful woman, died at 77 recently. She was an antiwar activist, politician, lawyer, and feminist. I last heard her speak about six months ago in her latest role as founder of an international women's group that worked on environmental issues.

I hadn't heard her voice for a long time it seems, and I remember thinking, "Gee, it's Bella, and she is as vibrant and persuasive

as she ever was." She was lighting a fire under us to take action on environmental issues.

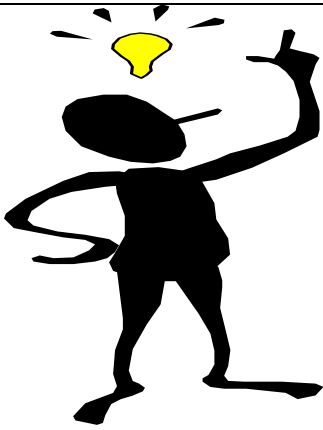
Bella Abzug was never lukewarm on any issue. She had soul. She was the first to call for Richard Nixon's impeachment and the first to call for an end to the war in Vietnam. In her book, *Bella*, published in 1972, she wrote, "I spend all day figuring out how to beat the machine and knock the crap out of the political power structure." Bella Abzug was one of the first out there working for abortion rights, day care, laws against employment discrimination. She was always on the side of the little guy; by that I mean those who were being treated poorly by society, the workplace, or the government.

Bella describes herself better than any of us ever could:

"I've been described as a tough and noisy woman, a prizefighter, a man hater, you name it. . . . They call me Battling Bella, Mother Courage, and a Jewish mother with more complaints than Portnoy. . . . There are those who say I'm impatient, impetuous, uppity, rude, profane, brash and overbearing. Whether I'm any of these things or all of them, you can decide for yourself. But whatever I am – and this ought to be made very clear at the outset – I am a very serious woman."

It seems that all of my life Bella Abzug has been around with her crazy, delightful hats, and her wonderful gravelly voice with that unmistakable New York accent. I'm really going to miss her. She was one "serious woman."

**Nell Newsom
Editor**



Welfare to Work?

In the December, 1997 issue of The Advocate, we included information from the Houston Chronicle on salaries at San Jacinto College. This is what we reported:

The following comparisons are worthy of note. Staff salaries at San Jacinto begin at \$18,369 for custodial, grounds and entry level clerks. The NHMCCD beginning salary for custodians (A02) is \$11,913, groundskeepers (A03) \$13,104, and general clerks (A04) \$14,414. A San Jacinto faculty member with a master's degree and no experience begins at \$29,400 for nine months, while at NHMCCD that faculty member with a master's degree and no experience begins at \$30,131 (nine month salaries). An experienced faculty member with a doctorate at San Jacinto earns up to \$53,900.

A comparison of salaries for our staff shows that our staff lag significantly behind San Jacinto. I have heard that some administrative leaders have questioned the accuracy of the San Jacinto figures reported in The Chronicle. I have no reason to doubt those figures, and I know the salaries for NHMCCD are accurate.

This last Advocate article spawned a good deal of interest in the compensation NHMCCD provides for staff. I have heard staff after story of staff barely making it from one paycheck to the next--and sometimes not making it. The reason is obvious: the college is paying these employees an inadequate wage.

The buzz phrase today among politicians and other leaders is "Welfare to Work," encouraging people to get off welfare by securing meaningful work, thus breaking the welfare cycle. In the case of a number of our employees, their full-time work here does not get them off welfare. They have diligently secured meaningful employment, but their wages are so low that they cannot move off the welfare rolls.

I submitted a Freedom of Information request to Human Resources at the District Office asking for U.S. Poverty Guidelines and the number of full-time NHMCCD employees whose salary falls into these categories. The guidelines are based on

income and number of family members. To research the family status of numerous employees would have been too great a burden to put on Human Resources, hence the request for simply providing salaries that fall under the different salary levels. Below is the response I received.

The U.S. Poverty Guidelines are defined as follows:

Family of 2 =income less than \$10,850
We have no full time employees below this level
Family of 3 =income less than \$13,650
We have 25 employees below this level
Family of 4 =income less than \$16,450
We have 35 employees below this level
Family of 5 =income less than \$19,250
We have 46 employees below this level

What may be concluded from these data? We cannot say with certainty that 25 employees are definitely at the poverty level because we are uncertain of their family status. We are certain, however, that they earn less than \$13,650. Is it reasonable to conclude that at least some members of this group are in a family of three? I think so. We can apply the same logic to the other reported levels. Agreed, some of the employees who earn less than \$19,250 may have a family of only four, thus not qualifying for the poverty level, albeit a very narrow miss. Some employees probably narrowly miss; others probably qualify. The total number of employees who potentially qualify is 106. Is it reasonable to conclude that more than half qualify? One fourth? Here are employees who have refused to sit back and live in a cycle of welfare. They have chosen to accept the challenge to break the welfare cycle. They have been betrayed. For them, "Welfare to Work" is really "Work and Continue on Welfare."

So what is to be done? It is time for top administration to work with the Board of Trustees to break the cycle. It is reprehensible to think that full-time employees should survive grossing slightly over \$1,000 per month (our lowest salary is \$12,151 annually). The union has criticized huge gaps between employee salaries before. When a straight percentage raise was given across the board, those employees with higher salaries benefited the most, and the gaps grew. Although union influence in this issue might be denied in some circles, Dr. Pickelman and the Board have recognized the problem. For the last three years, salary increases have been directed at narrowing these gaps. According to Human Resources, three years ago the college provided a 3% raise but offered a \$600 minimum for employees earning less than \$20,000. Two years ago, the raise was again 3% but with a \$1,000 minimum for any employee earning less than \$20,000. Last year, raises were awarded on a sliding percentage: 4.5% for any employee earning less than \$20,000, 3.5% for employees earning \$20,000 to \$30,000, 2.7% for employees earning between \$30,000 and \$60,000 and 2.5% for employees earning over \$60,000. If we apply the 1997-98 percentages this next

year, the problem is easy to see. 4.5% of our lowest salary, \$12,151, is \$546; 2.5% of our highest salary, \$144,207, is \$3,605. The union has commended the chancellor and Board for moving in the right direction for the last three years by establishing a minimum or applying a higher percentage raise for those employees at the bottom of the pay scale. While the college must continue to reward faculty for its hard work and advanced degrees, it must also more aggressively address the low staff salaries in the salary increases for next year.

It is unreasonable to assume that the college guarantee that no employee will be on welfare? The college cannot create a pay scale that takes into account number of family members. It can pay a livable wage that brings more employees above the poverty line. "Welfare to Work" is an admirable idea, but it takes commitment from two parties. The employees have made their commitment. Where is the commitment from the administration and Board?

Alan Hall
Contributions from Claude Taylor

FAMOUS UNION LEADERS

Rose Schneiderman was born in Poland and came to the United States at the age of six. She worked in New York department stores as early as age 13, and then at 15 she landed a job as a lining mailer for a hat and cap operation. In 1899 she, helped organize Local 23 of the United Cloth Hat and Cap Makers of North America (UCHCM). When she was 20, she was the first woman chosen to the executive board of UCHCM. In 1905, she affiliated with the Women's Trade Union League (WTUL). For the next 25 years, Schneiderman served the WTUL in executive positions. In 1933, she was the lone woman appointee to the Labor Advisory Board of the National Industrial Recovery Act. Other posts held by Schneiderman were secretary of the New York State Department of Labor, and vice-president of United Hatters, Cap, and Millinery Workers' International Union.

A political activist, Schneiderman chaired the industrial section of the Woman Suffrage Party of New York City. Schneiderman presided over the Women's Division of the American Labor Party and was an unsuccessful candidate for a New York U.S. Senate seat on the Farmer-Labor Party ticket.

Almost from the time she was employed in the United States in 1891, Rose Schneiderman devoted her life to the women's trade union movement as a political and union activist. Thanks to Rose Schneiderman for helping make many hard working women's lives less difficult by acting on the principle that together we can overcome.

Nell Newsom
Editor

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