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THE UNION PROPOSES...

On February 11 at a meeting of the Union's executive board and membership, the North Harris County College United Faculty Guild approved a 10-point program which was to be presented to the NHCC Board of Trustees at its March meeting. The aim of this program was to inform the Board of the immediate and long-term needs of people who work and study at the College.

After the meeting, NHCC-UF President Kevin Bailey said, "A general consensus emerged among union members during our discussions that the Guild should be trying to influence not only what happens at NHCC today but also tomorrow. This concern was also what our officers had been hearing from nonunion members in conversations before the college administration's restrictions went into effect last September. I think our group addressed everyone's concerns quite well with these ten proposals."

The union's five immediate goals deal with salary, travel, a faculty lounge, teaching awards, and the adding of a step on the grievance policy. For further consideration, the guild is advocating a 27-hour two-semester faculty teaching load, an academic dean, a college lecture series, a cooperative student book store, and a child care center on campus. In this issue of The Knight, the five goals for next year will be described; a discussion of the five long-term suggestions will be carried in the April-May issue of this newsletter.

The 1982 salary proposals of the NHCC-UF call for staggered pay increases and a one-time pay boost for faculty only. The Board's past policy of similar percent pay raises for all College employees needs to be changed because it results in gross inequities. Administrators receive too much; the support personnel receive too little; instructors remain in place.

Should the trustees raise salaries by 20 percent next year for all employees, the fiscal effects for the president, an average teacher, and a typical staffer would be most uneven. Mr. Thorne's salary would be increased from \$65,000 to \$78,000. An instructor who makes \$20,000 would receive \$24,000. A staffer who makes \$10,000 would receive \$12,000. This situation of rich administrators getting richer in the educational sector should be curtailed. Instead of a flat increase for all employees, the union recommends that the board award raises in the following way: 25-33% for staff

personnel, 15-20% for faculty, and 5-10% for administrators.

Along with staggered pay increases, the NHCC-UF believes that it is time for the Board of Trustees to reward its instructors for their excellent service. Both College President Thorne and Board President Charles Philipp told the faculty how much they recognized the great contribution of NHCC instructors to the phenomenal success of the College at last fall's inservice meeting. The time has come for the Board to show its appreciation by voting for a one-time pay boost so that NHCC instructors will be among the highest paid in the state.

This increase does not necessarily have to be a part of next year's salary contract, but the Board could appropriate these funds to the faculty next December. A \$1,500-to-\$2,000 pay increase could be approved for instructors only and the faculty pay scale adjusted to reflect this increase. This approach would permit the salary gap between NHCC and the top paying Texas junior colleges, such as San Jacinto College, to be closed.

At the present time, the College provides \$200 on the average for faculty travel to professional conventions and conferences. The guild is recommending that this sum be doubled to \$400 for each instructor. This figure would put NHCC instructors in line with their colleagues at the College of the Mainland.

The importance of professional travel can not be overstated if NHCC instructors are to keep up with current developments in their disciplines and to maintain their academic contacts. This situation is especially true for individuals who possess terminal degrees. Most regional and national conventions are held outside Texas in cities like Washington, New York, Chicago, Atlanta and Los Angeles. The \$200 allocation often has failed to cover the plane fare to some of these places.

The union believes that no instructor is looking for a free trip from the College. It is quite common for someone to spend an equal amount or more of his own funds along with the NHCC travel money to attend a national or regional conference. Because of the lack of travel money and increased air fares, one of our members had to cancel out on the second half of a National Science Foundation short course at a northern school last year. If the College is serious about professional development, the faculty travel budget should be doubled.

One of the guild's 1981 proposals, the establishment of a centrally-located faculty lounge, is being reintroduced this year in the hope that administrative action will be forthcoming. Because of the absence of contact among instructors from different divisions, especially between academic and vocational-technical departments, an informal gathering place would be an ideal spot on campus for teachers to meet under comfortable circumstances and exchange ideas.

A faculty lounge might encourage better communication and understanding among instructors. It certainly would heighten morale among teachers to know

that they have somewhere to go to get away from the office and the phone for a while. NHCC remains one of the few institutions in the state without such a facility.

The fourth goal of the guild is the reinstatement of teaching awards. As it has done for the writing awards, the Board should provide cash grants for those instructors who display teaching excellence in the classroom. After a one-year experiment with teaching awards, the president's decision to discontinue this practice and to replace it with a fall banquet honoring all instructors (a banquet which never took place) was wrong.

The College should recognize and reward teaching excellence. The point of these awards is to honor exceptional classroom instruction. Because only a few teachers will be singled out for special praise should not threaten the many good instructors who will not be so honored. If the awards are an annual event, those teachers missing out one year will have another chance for recognition in the future.

Adding an extra step to the College grievance policy is the fifth union goal for next year. It became apparent to the administration during the injunctive phase of the NHCC-UF lawsuit against the president and the board that the NHCC grievance policy needs to be amended. The grievance policy now ends with the president, a process which should be changed, for instructors should be assured of the institutional right of appeal to the board as the final step in the grievance procedure.

Chapman Smith, the school's attorney, suggested that his clients might be willing to offer this additional step to the union if the guild would drop its entire suit. This offer was unacceptable as a way of resolving NHCC-UF's long list of grievances against College officials. Furthermore, from the union's standpoint, the "Catch-22" of the present College grievance policy is that President Thorne, the subject of so many of our grievances, has the final authority to judge these same grievances. In the spirit of fair play and due process, the Board of Trustees should make itself the final judge in matters of institutional complaints.

The first question an accountant might ask about the guild's 1982 proposals is, "Can the College afford this package?" The answer is, "Yes." It is no secret that NHCC is sitting on a gold mine called a property tax base. To quote from an NHCC brochure, "The phenomenal growth of the area around the Intercontinental Airport, North Belt, and FM 1960 areas has added tremendously to the college's tax rolls. In 1972, the tax roll was \$273,000,000. By 1982, the figure has increased to \$4,584,825,000. In the past 12 months, three projects totaling an additional \$3,000,000,000 have been announced for the North Belt area." After the Tomball vote, this gold mine has gotten larger.

Along with property taxes, the Board of Trustees depends on state funds and tuition and fees to run the school. To increase state funds is in the hands of Austin, but the board has the ability to generate additional revenue through

tuition and fee increases. At present, NHCC tuition and fees are among the lowest for accredited colleges anywhere. The residents of Aldine, Spring, Humble, New Caney and Tomball school districts are paying \$4.00 for credit hour, the lowest tuition permitted by state law. Out-of-district students pay \$11 per hour.

Following policemen and firemen, public opinion polls show that citizens rank teachers third in terms of public employees who are underpaid and deserve better salaries. The problem at other schools, a lack of money, is not the case at NHCC. We have the funds if the board will commit itself to paying teachers for the work they do.

As one NHCC instructor told us, "When I found out that my apartment maintenance man made more than I did, I began to wonder. But I accepted that situation. However, when I found out that administrators at the college were being paid \$40,000 to \$60,000, I began to get upset."

The faculty and staff have a right to be upset when they see these high-salaried administrators, along with their free automobiles and other privileges, making no effort with the board to fight for better personnel salaries. It is, after all, the teachers and support personnel who have made the College what it is today.

(Editor's Note: This article is the first of two providing details and rationales for each of the ten proposals that the NHCC-UF advocates for the next few years regarding salaries and benefits. The next article will appear in the April-May issue of The Knight.)

UNIONS IN THE SOUTH

Union representatives recently announced plans for a massive organizational drive in the Houston area. Challenged by a presidential administration that labor activists term the most anti-labor in modern American history, AFL-CIO leaders have targeted the Bayou City in hopes of unionizing as many as 800,000 workers across the next ten years. An area where unemployment falls below the national average, continued economic growth appears a certainty, in-migration has stimulated a population surge, and the number of unionized workers falls below the national average, the Houston metropolitan area is ripe for such efforts.

National and local AFL-CIO leaders recognize their task will not be an easy one. Traditionally, union organizers have faced their greatest organizational challenges in the South--for a multiplicity of complex reasons. Among these,

labor observers emphasize the South's agrarian heritage and an attendant lack of understanding of unions and their operation, a strong individualism typical of southern culture, complex racial problems, and a business community and public wary of and unsympathetic to "outside" challenges to traditional authority. The result has been that, on the average, the percentage of unionized workers in the South has stood at about half the national average since the 1940's. As an indication of this situation, in 1978 Texas ranked sixth lowest among other states in union membership within its work force. Further, in heavily industrialized and urbanized Houston, only 20% of the work force is unionized, compared to approximately 25% nationwide.

These facts and figures, as revealing as they are, do not tell the complete story of labor and union organizations in the southernmost reaches of the nation. Overshadowed by labor's activism in more heavily industrialized sections of the nation, unions in the South appeared as early as the 1800's and experienced similar growth and decline patterns as those elsewhere. Contrary to popular belief, some of the strongest state labor federations and leaders have been and continue to be in southern states. Furthermore, former Secretary of Labor F. Ray Marshall points out that experience has shown that "once organized, southerners make loyal and militant members of strong unions." In the Houston area, recently completed research suggests that in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Houstonians, clearly southern in their heritage, were accustomed to the local craft unions, which often embodied middle class values and a moderate philosophy. Typically, local citizens did not view unions and union members as menacing. The appearance in 1919 and operation to the 1960's of a public City-County Employees Union for city-employed laborers supports such a contention and extends its application to the mid-20th century. From its beginnings, the public union met with the mayor and city council on wage and other issues and enjoyed payroll deduction for dues, one of the keys to a union's security. In 1946 the union called its first and only strike action against City Hall, a week-long crisis which violated no local or state laws and which reached a climax after 7 days off the job when over 5,000 AFL members from the surrounding area conducted a peaceful march on City Hall. City leaders and labor representatives resolved their differences within hours of the stirring demonstration. Several months later, in a referendum election, Houstonians approved a wage increase for city employees by a 7 to 1 margin after the city had already granted the same employees a wage hike in the aftermath of the strike. The message was clear. Houstonians often empathized with the workers' plight and felt little apparent concern that it was union leaders seeking to ameliorate it. Cold war tensions, the appearance of a more militant CIO, and the success of anti-labor leaders, not only in Texas but across the nation, in convincing the public that labor had gotten "rich and uppity" during the war, eroded some of the gains and support labor had garnered in the Depression and World War II years. Nevertheless, labor unions in the South as

elsewhere have remained visible, viable and active, despite the obstacles noted, in their commitment to the communities they serve and the employees they represent.

The recognition of labor's lengthy and colorful heritage in the South is particularly important to programs like the Houston Organizing Project. The study of labor relations in cities like Houston disputes the image created of southerners as monolithically opposed to unions. To the contention that southerners by and large cannot or will not be organized into unions, labor observers simply point to past experience. In Labor in the South, Ray Marshall quotes the director of organization for an international union who worked in the southern states for over 10 years. With an insight as applicable today as 100 years ago, the union leader stated: "I found in 11 years of organizing that the best people to work with were in the South. I found the greatest trouble in the South was not that the people were against unionization, but it was the tactics that the companies were able to use against organizing." Correspondingly, the directors of Houston's Organizing Project expect that "tactics" rather than lack of interest among local blue- and white-collar workers will create their greatest problems. Firms specializing in "union prevention" have already initiated contacts with some area employers in anticipation of union moves. Labor's outlook for success, however, is great. Marshall's research in 1968 convinced him that, across the South, trends favoring union growth exist--the alteration of southern attitudes under the impact of industrialization and in-migration, the growth of political power held by labor unions, the appearance of greater interest among national labor leaders in unionizing the South because conditions fought for elsewhere must be protected everywhere, and the increasing unionization of white-collar and government workers (the fastest growing area of unionization in the nation). Labor historian George Green, in a more recent study, reached a similar conclusion concerning union prospects in Texas. In the final analysis, he concluded: "There is mounting evidence that the attitudes, laws [such as right-to-work legislation], and economic factors that hinder unions will change significantly--not immediately but within a generation." Labor's Houston Organizing Project is one important step in that direction.

By "Solidarity"

(Editor's Note: From time to time, The Knight will print articles such as this one under the byline "Solidarity" to allow various interested individuals, union and nonunion, to contribute pertinent articles to this newsletter.)

"As long as you keep a person down, some part of you has to be down there to hold him down, so it means you cannot soar as you otherwise might."

--Marian Anderson on See It Now, CBS

NHCC-UF NEWS

On January 13, a public dispute arose, during registration, between "Chancellor-designate" Thorne and "President-designate" Airola. Airola apparently decided to cancel registration that evening due to the snow and ice. Thorne, who was away from the campus, returned and was unhappy with Airola's decision. An intense argument developed.

Airola defended his actions, stating that the safety of his staff was more important than a few hours of registration. Thorne insisted that the doors be open until 8:00 p.m. and that registration be manned by volunteers, once again demonstrating his lack of concern for faculty and staff. Certainly, Dr. Airola is to be commended for his position. Only a handful of students registered that night, and the next day's registration swelled with reasonable people who were not foolhardy enough to risk the hazardous road conditions. In fact, a new spring semester record for enrollment was reached.

Moreover, Thorne's attitude obviously demonstrates his complete unwillingness to share power even with fellow administrators. We already are quite aware of this dictatorial attitude toward the faculty and staff. One fears that Airola's new job as campus president will be in name only.

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The College hired the law firm of Baker and Botts and their anti-union attorney Chapman Smith to defend them in the lawsuit filed against them by the union. Baker and Botts is known to be one of the most expensive law firms in the country; yet no payments have been made by the College for this expensive legal protection. Finally, on January 14, the Board of Trustees approved a payment to Baker and Botts for legal fees. This installment would appear to be the first since a Houston attorney recently informed us that "you couldn't talk to Chapman Smith's secretary for \$5,000." Of course, the generous taxpayers of the NHCC district paid this bill.

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Dr. Robert Locander, an officer of the NHCC-UF, recently filed a grievance over the methods of determining registration assignments for the faculty. As a result, union officials have been informed that the administration will review the registration process and consider changes.

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Those who have regularly read this newsletter may have the impression that the union is anti-administration. This is certainly not the case; we only protest the actions of biased, undemocratic administrators. An example of enlightened college officials recently surfaced at College of the Mainland.

The Board of Trustees agreed to allow union officers to address the Board at its regular meeting. In addition, the union was accorded dues deduction from members' paychecks.

The Knight is a publication of North Harris County College United Faculty, a local guild affiliated with Texas United Faculty and the American Federation of Teachers.

The Knight is published bi-monthly. Anyone wishing to contribute articles may send them to:

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or may give them to one of the following officers of NHCC-UF:

Kevin Bailey, President
Alan Hall, Vice-President
Olin Joynton, Treasurer
Bob Locander, Secretary
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Letters to the editor are also welcome.

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