

KNIGHT

News and Information
of the NHCC United
Faculty/AFT

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"WHY I JOINED: A STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO EDUCATION"

The 1980's will certainly be recorded as the decade of priorities. Our needs are greater while our resources are more finite. What goals will we pursue and what means are we willing to commit to achieve these goals? The problems facing our nation are overwhelming, the list endless-unemployment, inequality, defense, crime, inflation, threats to social security and aid to the elderly, handicapped and dependant, drug abuse, pollution, and on and on...Many of these dilemmas are naturally interconnected; some appear to have no common bond. I submit to you that no matter what problem we examine, there is a fundamental underlying solution that cannot be ignored. EDUCATION, both quantity and quality, is the foundation or battleground on which all of our tomorrows will be won or lost.

If we are to employ workers, they must be educated to perform the jobs which are available. If we are to have an adequate defense, we must have military personnel who can operate technological and strategic weapons. Can we possibly imagine a military made up of individuals who believe the Falkland Islands are in Europe and Chicago in Indiana? That situation may exist now! We cannot deter crime unless we socialize our citizens to reject it as an option and to give them hope for the future rather than despair. If we are to halt the drug erosion of our children's minds, we must create a world that is amicable to the human endeavor and individuals who have no need for escapism. If we are to wipe out prejudice, we must educate our youth to the ignorance and danger of those who sell hate. Over and over again, education appears to be the only key that will sustain our standard of living and our strength for the future. A mind is a terrible thing to waste, for unless we can invent synthetic brains, we are in dangerous peril of losing our greatest natural resource. There are those who will argue that we cannot afford this commitment. I submit WE CAN AFFORD NOTHING LESS!

There is little doubt that education as our number one priority is under direct and indirect attack. Free public

education for all, long a pillar in our democratic aspiration, is under financial and philosophical seige. Higher education at an affordable price is being threatened by shortsighted budget cuts and lack of local, state and national commitments. Indirectly our nation, with educators themselves included, are committing educational abuse through neglect, indifference, apathy, and ommission. Who then, should and will fight this battle for educational parity? Can we honestly expect school-children to represent their future interests? Can the ignorant and undereducated find the expertise to wage war with the highly skilled and well-financed economic elite? The only logical alternative is for us to become educators in the full sense of the word. For the children who as yet cannot speak, we must speak for them! For the one-fifth of our population that cannot write, we must write for them! As the oil industry brought the energy crisis to the attention of elected officials and the American public, let us as educators learn from their expertise and example. Even as oil prices drop, the energy industry has successfully convinced much of America that this is a threat to our economic and financial stability.

What can one educator do to forward the cause of education? True, the efforts of one individual can appear minimal. However, the collective strength of hundreds and thousands of educators is a powerful force. The very least an educator can do is to become a member of all professional organizations. The combined yearly dues of AFT, TJCTA, and AAUP are \$268.00, money that will be well spent and conservative in comparison to other career organizational dues. These dues go for lobbying, political action, legal counsel, research and professional development, training, staff, defense funds, benefits, etc. The key to convincing elected officials on any issue is access. Teachers can and must become active in the political arena. One dedicated person can make a difference in a campaign; active members of an organization can make political dreams come true. But once the opera is over, the real work begins. Lobbying at the local, state, and national level is crucial. Lobbying groups that are well organized and know when and how to raise their voices can have influence on policymakers far out of proporation to the number of votes they can deliver--National Rifle Association case in point.

Lobbying does not come cheap. Educators must take their individual responsibility for funding these efforts. Membership,

alone, however, is not enough. We must speak out to the public, we must become active in our organizations, and we must become politically involved in the selection of our leaders. For those who find excuses in their family responsibilities and problems, their economic woes, their fears over internal promotion, their belief that they have fought a good fight in days gone by--renew and cleanse yourselves or realize that you can no longer be an educator in the true sense of the word and make room for those who are dedicated to the profession. We must have commitment in our classrooms, but we must also make sure there will be excellence in tomorrow's classrooms. In the future will the best and the brightest become educators or will the field attract, as it currently is, the lowest scoring students who settle on education because they cannot get in to other undergraduate programs?

Let us move forward in all avenues:

Let the regents, boards, and administrations build the necessary facilities, provide the structural and operational environment, and balance the necessary books.

Let the Faculty Senates act in an advisory capacity providing local faculty input to the administrations and the student bodies.

Let TJCTA represent junior colleges in general, seeking legislative funds and monitoring the coordinating board.

Let AFT provide a powerful voice specifically for the rights of teachers at all levels and lobbying at the state and national level with an alliance of all workers to promote the priority of education.

Let AAUP pursue a strong defense of academic freedom and serve as a watchdog censoring any institution that would violate these principles.

Let us commonly support the rights and freedoms of all. If any one organization does not enjoy constitutional liberties, none of them do. If one person does not have freedom of speech, press, assembly, and petition; no one does. It is always easy to support people's right to free speech if you agree with every word they say. The true test of democracy, however, comes when you do not agree with a word they say, but you will defend to death their right to say it. This is particularly important in higher education where learning and knowledge are based on the existence of an open and free exchange of ideas.

Let us not fight within--our common opposition is too great, the stakes are too high. But let each of us do SOMETHING!

We must also be a morally excellent people. We cannot be a morally mediocre people. If our vision informs our morality, then our standards of judgement will be geared to the significant. Let us not fight to win at all costs, but rather engage in ethical, professional, and legal endeavors. We must also stop affirming and condemning our associates based on banal, superficial, and petty notions. We have differences, so let us learn to make them work to our advantage rather than against us. But, on that which is significant and a part of our vision, we must be demanding--especially of ourselves!

To those who would oppose education, let us make our strategy clear:

For those who are old, we will outlast you,
For those who are young, we will outmaneuver you,
For those who are ignorant, we will educate you,
For those who are educated, we will show you the errors of your ways.

We will suffer setbacks, we will not acknowledge defeat,
We will not, under any circumstances, give up the cause; the alternatives are unacceptable.

Possibly what I want to express about what I must do, what you must do, what all of us must do together, could be found in the words of a historian who wrote 200 or 300 years from now. (I use the past tense because it will either be written this way or it will not be written at all.) In his summation on the chapter of the 20th century, this historian borrowed some expressions from Faulkner, Camus, and Paul. This is what he wrote, "At a time when their very survival was in jeopardy as well as their values and goals, not only did they endure, but they prevailed! And, not only did they prevail, but they built a better world! They were able to do this because each demanded of himself, and each demanded for himself, only one thing. Each wanted, one day to make this assessment of his or her own life: "I have fought the good fight! I have finished my course! I have kept the faith!"

Carolyn Davis
Faculty Senate, AFT
TJCTA, AAUP Member

NHCC-UNITED FACULTY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 1983-1984

1. A REAL SALARY AND COST-OF-LIVING INCREASE OF 15%
(This represents a 5% cost-of-living increase and a 10% raise in real income so NHCC will reach parity with Houston area colleges and other urban junior colleges in Texas).
2. A COLLEGE PAID DENTAL INSURANCE PLAN for employees with benefits comparable to the AFT plan presently available to members.
3. TUITION WAIVER for NHCC courses taken by an immediate family member of a college employee.
4. REVISION OF ACCOUNTING PROCEDURES to prevent late ORP payments by the college. Other colleges are more efficient in making these payments to employee accounts.
5. ON CAMPUS DAY CARE PROGRAM.
6. AN INCREASE IN PROFESSIONAL DUES REIMBURSEMENT from the ~~current~~ \$15 to \$25.
7. WORKLOAD EQUALIZATION for IE faculty, counselors, and others.
8. AN INCREASE IN TOTAL ACCUMULATIVE SICK DAYS from 65 to 90 so that NHCC will reach the average provided by most area junior colleges.
9. CONTINUED ATTENTION TO TEXTBOOK COSTS and impact on students.
10. REDUCE CLASS TEACHING LOAD from 5 and 5 courses fall and spring semester to 4 and 5 class load.
11. ESTABLISHMENT OF A COLLEGE-WIDE HONORS PROGRAM to facilitate the advanced student.
12. PAID SABBATICAL LEAVE for NHCC faculty members.

LETTER TO THE FACULTY FROM THE PRESIDENT OF NHCC-UF

A few weeks ago the lawsuit filed by the NHCC-UF went to trial, exactly two years after it was initiated. It has been a long and difficult time for all union members and it is unfortunate that this action was necessary. However, the administration and Board of Trustees have repeatedly refused to recognize the constitutionally protected rights of the union and its members. We went to Court with the sincere hope that justice and fairness would prevail.

Whatever the outcome, it is our hope that all of us--union and non-union faculty, administration, and Board members--will put this ordeal behind us. Undoubtedly some bitterness will remain on both sides, but the collective good of the faculty and institution demands that we behave professionally and attempt to work together toward what is best for North Harris County College.

The union will continue to pursue our sensible desire for shared governance at NHCC. That is our ultimate goal. We want the faculty to be able to make a free choice over what organization represents them. ~~We are convinced that you will make a reasonable choice, if it is made without interference from the administration and the Board. That ultimately is what the lawsuit is all about. I think I can speak for all union members at the college when I say that we need to put this case behind us and get about the business of educating our students and bettering the working conditions at NHCC. We sincerely hope that action like this will not be necessary again.~~

Sincerely,
Kevin Bailey

NHCC-UF NEWS

Last December the first meeting of the Gulf Coast Regional Council of TUF Guilds met. A second meeting was held in February of this year. Present were representatives from NHCC, San Jacinto College, Lee College, College of the Mainland, Texas Southern, Prairie View, Lamar, U. of Houston at Clear Lake, and Teaching Assistants from the U. of Houston. The

delegates elected Mike Stoma of NHCC as the Council's only officer--Secretary/Treasurer. The goal of the Council is to develop cooperative efforts among area TUF guilds, to provide each other with assistance, and to establish a regional organizing program.

On March 17th and 18th, the lawsuit filed by the NHCC-United Faculty against the NHCC Board and administration went to trial before Federal Judge James De Anda. Testimony was heard from both sides, with union officials alledging that the college embarked on a three pronged anti-union campaign consisting of (1) disparate organizational treatment; (2) the adoption of anti-union policies and sending of a letter by President Thorne indicating that union membership "would not be in the best interests of the Faculty"; and (3) individual acts of harrassment against union members and officers. The union maintains that college officials engaged in a conspiracy designed to abolish the union. This conspiracy was based on creating a "climate of fear" on the campus through intimidation, harrassment, and coercion of the faculty and interference in our constitutionally protected right to engage in union activity.

The college did not deny most of the allegations but maintained they had a right to act as they did or that they had changed their behavior. They claimed that unequal organizational treatment did not exist because no other faculty organizations operate on campus. The Faculty Senate is not, according to the administration, a faculty organization. The union maintains that the Senate is a viable, independent faculty organization.

At the conclusion of the trial Judge De Anda told each attorney to submit written briefs within ten days. Each side was given five days to respond to the others brief and then, as soon as possible, a decision would be announced.

THE NHCC-UF Guild congratulates Mrs. Lou Shirley and Mr. Roy Hohl on their election to the NHCC Board of Trustees. The Guild sincerely desires to work in cooperation with these new Board members.

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 bimonthly. Anyone wishing to contribute articles may send them to:

NHCC-UF/TUF/AFT

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

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THE KNIGHT is a member of the Union Teacher Press Association.

Letters to the editor are always welcome. Anyone wishing information on becoming a member of this organization is encouraged to contact any one of the above officers.

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