

BOARD REPLACES ANTI-UNION POLICY

In its September meeting the College Board of Trustees voted to rescind its anti-union policy which is welcome news for NHCC-UF members. Under this policy it was morally difficult for faculty members to exercise their legally protected right to belong to a union because in signing their annual employment contracts they agree to support and uphold the policies of the College. For this reason the removal of the policy was a key provision in the union's suit against the Board (now on appeal).

In its place the Board has adopted a nonspecific statement denying the need for "adversarial groups represented by outside organizations" to promote the interests of employees. Many union members have wondered just what this language means. Will any group that takes a stand different from the Board's be found "adversarial"? If on their own a group of employees elects to affiliate with a state or national organization, will that group be classified as "outside"? The problem of vagueness in the new policy was recently addressed by Board Member David Robinson in conversation with two union officers. Mr. Robinson assured the officers that the new policy is a positive thing for the union, but he also warned that it could mean anything that the Board wanted it to mean. Perhaps the Board will clarify its new policy in an addendum. In the meantime, it's a relief to belong to a group no longer specifically condemned.

-- Olin Joynton

COMPUTERS FOR ADVISING

I was invited to share my ongoing concern through this forum even though I am not a member.

When a student who intends to transfer comes to our college, he/she must know the courses to take in the desired major. It is virtually impossible to advise 5000-6000 new students as well as returning students in a three-week period of time during the summer. Senior colleges change their requirements often, and to disseminate that information is next to impossible. Because of this, many students takes courses that are not needed. We do these students a grave injustice.

The process could be simple. If all common degrees were put in a computer, the student would receive a degree plan listing all necessary courses prior to the first registration. Then any counselor or faculty member could advise the student as to the courses to take each semester from the printed degree plan.

Five years ago we began requesting this. The purchase of a word processor was tabled pending the purchase of a new computer which, according to the administration, would be able to accomplish the task of computer-aided degree plans easily. Each year this project is put "on the back burner" because of more important priorities. All the beautiful buildings, all the upkeep, and all the sound financial foundations mean nothing if the student is not served. The two top priorities can only be that first, the student takes the courses required in the chosen major and second, the student receives excellent instruction in our classrooms. All else is secondary.

-- Ed Albracht

LAWSUIT UPDATE

In March of 1981 the NHCC United Faculty filed a federal lawsuit alleging that the College violated the First Amendment rights of union members at the College. Although Judge James DeAnda eventually ruled in favor of the College, most of the issues of the case have been resolved voluntarily by the Board in favor of the union. An in-house resolution of this kind is of course superior to a court-ordered one, and we look forward to better working conditions as a result of this cooperative spirit. We only regret that the litigation was necessary in the first place. What follows is a list of issues upon which we built our case, and next to that column is an explanation of how these were resolved.

Court Issues

Removal of the anti-union policy.

Ability to address the Board.

Right to appeal a grievance to the Board.

Ability to recruit members and receive equal treatment on campus.

Right to receive professional leave and travel funds for labor-related academic conferences.

President Thorne's order restraining the union president from speaking at an on-campus political rally.

Right of the union to advertise in the student newspaper.

Resolution

New Board Policy 341 is no longer anti-union in nature.

New Board Policy 703.01 allows employees and groups to speak before the Board.

This was included as Step 5 in the Grievance Procedure in Policy 342.

The College conceded this during trial, and it was included as Point Nine in the Judge's Finding of Facts.

Last spring two union members received both leave and funds.

The court held that Defendant Thorne may have violated 21.904 of the Texas Education Code by forbidding such speech.

No resolution.

-- Kevin Bailey

NEW UNION OFFICERS

The NHCC United Faculty held an election of officers during its membership meeting on October 4, 1985. Congratulations to:

Alan Hall, President
Pat Gray, Vice-President

Olin Joynton, Secretary
Bob Locander, Treasurer