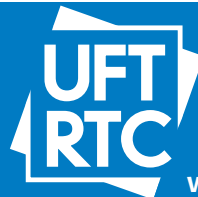


RETIREE



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THE UNITED FEDERATION OF TEACHERS RETIRED TEACHERS CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

Adversity brings unity

As RTC leaders have been traveling around the country and the greater New York area for RTC annual meetings, they have encountered many members who come up and ask, "Do you have any good news to tell us?" It immediately brings to mind the ancient Chinese curse, "May you live in interesting times." Yes, there is good news but it has to be gleaned from adversity.

Let's consider our in-service colleagues. 60% of them have six or seven years of service or fewer. At the September citywide chapter leaders meeting, someone asked how many were new chapter leaders and it looked like half raised their hands, a remarkable turnover. If you went back to visit your old school, I wonder if you would know anyone.

Do you remember as a youngster looking at the older generation wondering if you, we, could ever measure up to their standards?

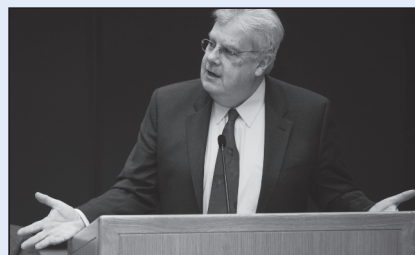
These folks were the teachers and other educators who joined the profession ahead of us, some during the Great Depression and many others in the post-World War II era. As they looked on us a bit quizzically, we were determined to emulate their scholarship and their professionalism.

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

By Tom Murphy

Will there ever come a time when we won't have to struggle to protect the rights and benefits we have worked and fought so hard for?



We rarely mention improving benefits these days — as we once did — because we're so busy trying to hang on to what we have.

Today, in the wake of a recession that has left us with a \$14 trillion dollar deficit and a 9.4% unemployment rate, the 112th Congress and state legislatures across the country are preparing to make public employees the scapegoats for all that has gone wrong economically by targeting the right to organize and the right to bargain collectively and by curbing our salaries and benefits.

Robert Reich, Secretary of Labor in the Clinton administration, calls it a "shell game" designed to keep the public's focus on public employee benefits and away from soaring corporate executive pay, Wall Street bonuses that are higher than before taxpayers bailed them out and the billions raked in by hedge-fund and private-equity managers who pay only 15% tax on that income because it's con-

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URGENT ACTION ALERT

**HELP FIGHT AGAINST THE ASSAULT ON
PUBLIC EMPLOYEES IN NEW YORK,
WISCONSIN AND ELSEWHERE!**

**For the latest updates and ways you can support
your sisters and brothers under attack,
visit the UFT website at www.uft.org.**

**Come to the RTC action rally,
part of our general membership meeting:**

TUESDAY, MARCH 15, 1 P.M.

UFT Central, 52 Broadway, NY, NY, 2nd floor

Adversity brings unity *continued from page 1*

We of course brought our youthful enthusiasm and union activism into play.

So, how do we now view our young, in-service colleagues? Do we, too, have some of that old-timer attitude we felt as we started out? Can they spell? Do they know their subject? Are they committed to standards as we were? Well, rest assured that we are in good hands.

Some of the things they are facing are, however, daunting.

They have not had a new contract since the last one expired in October 2009. But they have expressed amazing support for Michael Mulgrew and the union leadership in standing up to the city's attempts to weaken and divide and conquer and threaten and intimidate. Secure in the Triborough Law's protection that keeps expired contract provisions intact as long as there is not any job action that may legally be defined as a strike, they are strong in their solidarity. (Actually, even this is under attack in Albany.) There have been other good signs and victories.

Last December on a bitter cold day, the Delegate Assembly met and then immediately adjourned to march up Broadway to protest insane Department of Education policies, bringing their voices to the Tweed Court House, the DOE headquarters behind City Hall. Some may have wondered if the delegates would fully participate and they did, in spades. And they are solidly behind their beleaguered senior colleagues who have had their positions pulled out from under them through unwarranted school closings.

In the last elections in New York City, our in-service colleagues achieved additional victories. A Manhattan Assemblyman who introduced legislation for eliminating tenure was challenged in the primary by one of our teachers and, while the Assemblyman was not beaten, it put him and other legislators on notice that they would pay a price for such action. Approximately six legislators who spoke out for our position on charter schools were challenged by anti-public education candidates, many of whom were funded by Wall Street dollars and our enemies. Through concerted political action that would remind you of those old school board campaigns we used to wage, we won every such race for our political allies, with as much of 80% of the vote.

The other adversity that they are up against, one that you and I did not have to face, is the test evaluation assault on our colleagues' professionalism and academic judgment.

Do you remember that year when you achieved some special and spectacular results with a particular class of students? You threw your all into it, leaving no stone unturned to really help every one of your pupils. It felt so great to see such achievements. Maybe the next year, you did everything the same; worked to the highest degree and yet, the achievement of that year's class was not so spectacular, in spite of all your best efforts. What should be the judgment of both years taken together?

Those who believe in test results as a primary tool of evaluation would deem you a proficient teacher one year, and an abject failure the next. That is the kind of assault our in-service colleagues are facing.

But the good news is, they know that the union is fighting on their behalf and that there is great solidarity to oppose such blighted policy ideas.

So, adversity yes. But also unity and solidarity.

In the face of adversity — and bitter cold— UFT members turned out in spades to protest school closings.



RTC members respond to Klein's attack on pensions

On January 10, 2011, the *Wall Street Journal* published an article entitled "Why Teacher Pensions Don't Work" by former Chancellor Joel Klein. Klein, who made \$250,000 a year as chancellor and now earns \$3.5 million in salary and bonuses working for Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation, is collecting a pension of \$34,000 from the city after his eight years as chancellor. A teacher with a master's degree would need about 20 years to earn a comparable pension. RTC members had the following reactions, sent as letters to the editor of the *Journal*.



Vincent Gaglione

Even if I hadn't known that he took a defined benefit pension of about \$34,000/annum for only eight years work in the New York City school system or that he took a high paying position to sell educational materials for the *Wall Street Journal's* publisher, who probably prompted him to write the piece, I still wouldn't be any more willing to consider some of Joel Klein's arguments against defined benefit pensions for teachers.

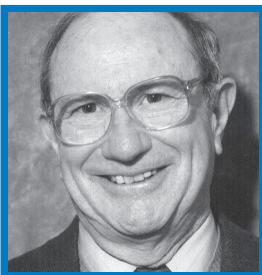
I taught for more than 35 years in the New York City school system and have my pension because I made teaching my career.

I taught through the 1975 fiscal crisis and accepted deferred wages and deteriorated working conditions to help keep the city school system alive and well. I have my pension because the pay I received for so many of those years was so meager.



Doreen Ellis

People who enter the teaching profession do it for a satisfactory career and their love for this country. At least they should go into teaching for that reason, according to President Obama. To become a good and experienced educator, one must stay a length of time. The defined benefit plan motivates people entering the field to stay that length of time (20 or more years). We want teachers to become better and more experienced. Our pension plans may motivate the newer inexperienced professional to stay on.



John Soldini

Klein simply combines misinformation and half-truths with omissions to develop a one-sided, biased picture. He compounds this injustice by drawing broad, misleading conclusions that are not buttressed by any mathematical facts or academic studies.

For instance, he gives the false impression that the retirees all are guaranteed a certain interest amount when only those who select a fixed interest payment are in that category. Nor does he say that when the stock market is doing very well it is the city and not the retiree who ultimately receives the surplus money above the guaranteed interest rate.

Finally, he draws two completely unsubstantiated and hard-to-believe conclusions. First, that it is the defined pension benefit system that discourages talented teachers from remaining in the system, and second, that burnt-out teachers are staying in the system because of the pension. There have been many studies of why young teachers leave the system and none of the studies indicate that the defined pension benefit is the culprit. The causes are more often poor working conditions, greater opportunity in the private sector, the difficulty of teaching, and disciplinary problems confronting classroom teachers.

Concerning the second conclusion, that it's the pension that keeps burnt-out teachers in the classroom. Again, there is no such study that indicates the truth of that statement.

sidered capital gains.

"It's far more convenient to go after the people who are doing the public's work, police officers, firefighters, teachers, social workers, sanitation workers, and federal employees (who have already had their salaries frozen)," he said, calling it a version of class warfare that "pits private sector workers against public servants, comparing one group's modest incomes and benefits with another group's modest incomes and benefits."

And unions are the prime targets in this shell game.

Across the country state legislatures are looking for ways to limit the power of labor unions using rhetoric like "labor's swollen power." Education and teachers' rights and benefits are high on the target list of most states, with pensions, tenure and accountability topping the list. The battle in Wisconsin over collective bargaining rights has generated the

biggest fight back, but these attacks are happening in Ohio, Michigan, Tennessee, Indiana and New Jersey as well.

Former UFT President Randi Weingarten, now AFT president, said, "They're throwing the kitchen sink at us. We're seeing people use the budget crisis to roll back workers' voices and any ability of workers to join collectively in any way whatsoever."

A *New York Times* article called Governor Cuomo's salary freeze for state workers "his first shot in the much-anticipated battle with the state's powerful public-sector unions."

Across the river, New Jersey Governor Christie skipped the required \$3.1 billion payment into the state pension fund, increasing the state's unfunded pension liability to \$53.9 billion.

To top off all this bad news we have a new Congress set on repealing the last Congress's historic health care reform despite

the fact that many parts of that Affordable Care Act are already in effect and helping tens of millions of American families get quality health care. If they get their way, insurance companies will once again have the right to deny coverage to people with pre-existing conditions, drop or limit coverage if you become sick and charge women higher premiums than men.

Seniors face immediate loss of critical drug savings and free preventive care under Medicare if the repeal effort is successful.

The RTC, the UFT, NYSUT, the AFT and unions and retiree organizations across the country are working to keep the threats at bay. Please contribute as generously as you can to COPE and make sure we have your email address to keep you updated and on call for help so, working together, we can protect our rights and benefits from the attacks coming at us from every direction.



UFT RETIREE

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