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## There *Is* a Better Way: Arbitration, not Strikes



The Yale administration and Locals 34 and 35 are at a crossroads. There is no need for us to impose further division and strife on the Yale and New Haven communities. That result should not be acceptable.

As an alternative to strife, Locals 34 and 35 propose binding arbitration of all unresolved contract issues.

We hope that President Levin and the Yale Corporation will agree.

President Levin proposed in 2001 that Yale and the Unions jointly retain an experienced labor-management consultant to assess Yale's decades-long history of labor trouble, and to make recommendations to break that destructive cycle. The Unions agreed.

The firm of Restructuring Associates, Inc. (RAI) and one of its principal consultants, John R. Stepp, a former Deputy Under-Secretary of Labor in the Reagan administration, were retained by Yale and the Unions.

The consultant issued a scathing assessment of the costs and lost opportunities of the poor employee relations and poor management at Yale, and the resulting strikes—six in a 28-year period.

The consultant made three recommendations to begin the process of reversing that terrible history. Those recommendations were an important step toward lasting peace at Yale.

The Unions at Yale embraced all three recommendations. President Levin refused to endorse them.

Moreover, after a period of working with Mr. Stepp and RAI in a non-adversarial approach to contract negotiations, the Yale administration unilaterally terminated the consultant, without discussion with the Unions, and returned to traditional adversarial bargaining.

Predictably, the negotiations for new Union contracts at Yale regressed to the all-too-familiar cycle: no University decision-makers at negotiations, entrenched positions, an expensive Yale public relations campaign, strike authorization votes by Union members, and the promise of more discord.

Even so, Locals 34 and 35 have remained at the bargaining table for more than one full year after the previous contracts expired, hoping for peace.

President Levin's response, after writing to union members proclaiming his desire to give them last year's salary increase, was to withdraw Yale's earlier offer for retroactive increases for 2002, even though the Unions stayed at the table and have set no strike deadline.

Still, the Unions at Yale believe there is an opportunity for a better way.

### ***We believe***

that it is not necessary to return to strikes as the usual way of settling labor-management disputes at Yale;

that it is just as important now as when the consultant made his recommendations to overhaul the way work is done at Yale—and the way Yale, its employees and their Unions relate to one another—so that productivity, service, and morale can all be improved;

that Yale employees have earned fair compensation, retirement with dignity, the opportunity for advancement through training, job security, fair hiring practices and respect;

that Yale, as President Levin himself wrote to Union members, is in excellent shape financially and can afford a fair settlement; *and*

that, especially in an academic community, logic, fairness and the common good should determine the outcome of negotiations, and not a contest of strength that diverts students and faculty from their primary mission, and inflicts pain and division on the greater New Haven community.

We continue to believe that the consultant's recommendations are crucial to peace and productivity at Yale, and we are committed to pursuing those recommendations.

We propose, as another step toward peace, as an alternative to strikes, that the contract issues separating the Yale administration and Locals 34 and 35 (mandatory subjects of bargaining), be submitted for binding arbitration by a mutually agreed-upon neutral party, or panel of neutrals.

Locals 34 and 35 are not afraid to submit all our positions to impartial scrutiny. We are willing to run the risk that a neutral decision-maker might find our positions lacking. We hope that President Levin is willing to run the same risk.

Together, while there is still time, let us pursue the better way. Let us take one more step toward peace.

