

WORKING TOGETHER

Monthly Newsletter of Locals 34 & 35

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The True Face of Democracy

Yale says it supports democracy, but does it really? This question lies at the heart of the debate raging on campus, a debate that reached a new intensity last month in the dueling democracy lectures of President Levin and Yale Professor Michael Denning (American Studies). Locals 34 & 35 are now planning to take a stand for democracy, at a joint membership meeting on March 28, with a key vote on GESO and the Yale New-Haven Hospital union drives.

On February 13, Professor Denning began his Tercentennial lecture by saying, "I am struck by the irony of an undemocratic institution like Yale University sponsoring a series of lectures on democracy." He continued, "the last 60 years have seen struggles on this campus to establish the basic democratic rights of employees to union organization, and the university has resisted those rights at every turn. To this day, graduate teachers and hospital workers at the Yale-New Haven Hospital have yet to win the basic democratic rights—affirmed in a variety of international human-rights instruments—to form a union, to bargain collectively, and to strike."

Denning included two Yale employees in his lecture. Rebecca Ruquist [right], a graduate teacher in the French department, told how her program director "pulled me into her office to lecture me" and how the director said she "would include a mention of my GESO organizing in a future letter of recommendation." Peg Tamulevich [left], a secretary at the hospital,



explained, "When I was handing out union leaflets outside the hospital, police officers with guns—employed by Yale-New Haven—told me I would be arrested and forced me to stop." Denning then used these

and other stories to argue: "The right to organize is now a crucial civil rights issue. The right to organize is the fundamental democratic issue of our time."

One week earlier, on February 6 and 8, President Levin had presented a very different view. When pressed during questioning, he agreed that unions had been important to the greater economic equality and shared prosperity of the 1950s and conceded that "freedom of association as a general proposition is something we encourage." Levin sounded hopeful: "I would like nothing better in my tenure as President of Yale than to make this a place for model labor relations. I think that it doesn't serve this community well to have the kind of contentious labor environment that we have."

On specifics, however, Levin was firm. Regarding graduate teachers, he said, "For this institution and institutions of higher education in America to function best, unionization isn't really an appropriate vehicle." As for the hospital workers, he said, "Obviously we don't control Yale-New Haven Hospital." (This despite the fact that Levin himself and numerous other university officials sit on the hospital board.) Levin's message was clear: Yale University will neither support nor strengthen the freedom of association or the right to organize for its graduate teachers and hospital workers.

Despite these statements, Levin looked at the audience and said straightforwardly: "I cannot think of a single instance in which it could be fairly said that we've blockaded the ability of people to organize."

Those of us in Locals 34 & 35 know better. Yale tried to "blockade" the formation of Local 34 in the 1980s, and forced a difficult struggle for survival in the 1970s and 1990s. From the very

beginning, Yale has fought our unions, and we see history repeat itself with our sisters and brothers organizing GESO and the hospital workers union.

There is a solution to this contradiction. Yale should do what it says it does and guarantee the right of freedom of association to all members of its community. The administration should remain neutral and support



the democratic right to choose. We in Locals 34 & 35 value this freedom because we have been forced by Yale to defend it so often. Supporting other Yale workers in their struggle to organize isn't only the right thing to do, it is something we understand because we were there ourselves back in 1984, when our locals had to fight so hard for recognition for Local

34. Supporting other organizing workers on campus is also the smart thing to do because we'll all get better contracts with a greater number of organized workers at the bargaining table.

To show Yale that we stand up for what we believe, we're having a joint Local 34/Local 35 membership meeting on March 28 in Woolsey Hall. We want to show our sisters and brothers in GESO and at Yale-New

Haven Hospital that we support them and their right to have a union. Solidarity among organized workers at Yale is the way to win, so come to the big meeting on March 28 and vote YES

A Peek Inside:

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"I cannot think of a single instance in which it could be fairly said that we've blockaded the ability of people to organize." - Yale President Richard Levin, February 8, 2001

Human Rights Watch

On February 7th, Lance Compa, a Yale graduate, Cornell University professor, and author of a *Human Rights Watch* report on workers' rights in the US, came to campus. He spoke at a forum focusing on Yale's failure to live up to international human rights standards in its dealings with Yale's graduate teachers and hospital workers.

GESO members and hospital workers described management abuses of the democratic process. Many examples are found in Compa's HRW report: harassing and threatening to arrest workers handing out union leaflets (Violation: Right to Freedom of Speech), threatening a teaching assistant's recommendation, and future job

prospects, if she joins the union (Violation: Right to Freedom of Association), and holding "captive audience" meetings with workers who have made their union activity public (Violation: Right to Self-Determination). Compa's report states: "Many workers who try to form and join trade unions to bargain with their employers are spied on, harassed, pressured, threatened, suspended, fired, deported or otherwise victimized in reprisal for their exercise of the right to freedom of association." Sound familiar?

While Yale touts democracy in this, its tercentennial year, Yale needs to extend its vision of democracy to its own employees,

struggling to organize their respective unions. Democracy does not include intimidation, harassment and denial of basic freedoms. Democracy does not include ignoring court decisions that graduate student teachers are workers. In fact, according to Compa's report, "The right to organize, the right to bargain collectively and the right to strike unfold seamlessly from the basic right to freedom of association." Yale take note.

Read the Human Rights Watch Report at:
www.hrw.org/reports/2000/uslabor

News in Brief

Sick Leave vs. Leave of Absence

The Local 34 contract (article 20) gives us the right to use accumulated sick time in times of illness or injury, but the University has been forcing workers to apply for medical leaves of absence or imposing medical leaves of absence on workers who are sick.

The impact on employees is serious: On a medical leave of absence, a worker must use vacation, sick or personal time for holidays or recess days. Vacation time is earned, but cannot be used until 30 days after returning to work. And the University takes back the two-week rolling advance when a leave is processed, often leaving a sick or injured worker with a zero-sum paycheck, even if he or she has enough sick time to cover both the leave and the rolling advance.

The University's actions are unfair and disrespectful to us all and in violation of our contract. Local 34 has filed a class action grievance over this issue. If you have been or are being affected by the University's new leave policy, contact your steward, committee person or organizer, or call the union office.

Evaluations? No Thanks.

Performance Enrichment Questionnaires and Performance Planning Worksheets are being handed out in Pathology and Medical ITS departments respectively. They are not tied to fair standards or merit, and they are not grievable. About two years

ago in the Yale Faculty Practice/Office of Professional Services department, workers stopped an attempt to implement similar evaluations by sticking together and signing a petition.

C&T employees of Yale University are under no obligation to fill out and sign any such forms, questionnaires or evaluations.

There is a better way to improve workers' and departments' performance. The Local 34 contract provides for quarterly employee participation meetings: "The University and the Union recognize that it is in the best interest of the parties to develop maximum possible productivity, to provide satisfying work, to enhance quality of performance, and to enable Staff Members to contribute to the employment relationship" (Art. IX).

If you have any questions, call your steward or the union office (624-5161).

More Layoffs or More Workers?

In January, Arbitrator Parker Denaco held that Yale did not violate the Local 34 contract when it laid off our members who worked at YPI last year.

What does this mean for our job security? On one level, it reinforces a bad decision



On February 22, members of the Board of Aldermen attended a packed briefing on the importance of unions to the future of the New Haven economy.

by Arbitrator Janet Spencer that opened a loophole for layoffs where work will be done by a subcontractor's employees rather than by Local 34 members. On another level, it's a reminder that the best way to protect our work is to organize everyone who does that work. If the Yale-New Haven Hospital workers were union members, the merger of YPI and the Y-NHH psychiatric department might have avoided mass layoffs. Similarly, if Yale's long-term casuals and temps joined Local 34, everyone would benefit.

To unionize these workers would take two major commitments: supporting the organizing drive among hospital workers and talking to every casual and temp at Yale. In 1996, Local 35 made bringing casuals into the union a priority, and hundreds of workers and their families gained benefits and respect. Maybe now is the time for Local 34 to set the same goal.

Food Fight

Cooks from all the Yale dining halls have joined together to raise awareness about the drop in Yale's food quality. Meetings have been held with the union and the executive chef to discuss the problems. On Wednesday, February 14, a press conference was held to inform students.

The University subcontracted the management of the dining halls in 1998. Since then, most of the supplies (meat, vegetables, canned goods, etc.) have been purchased from SYSCO, a huge food distribution company. The use of greater New Haven food vendors was stopped, and the receiving and meat cutting area at Long Wharf was closed down.

SYSCO's prices are higher than the former vendor's, so ARAMARK is cutting menus. Shrimp has been eliminated, and

so have the ever-popular spring rolls. Hamburgers have gone from 5 oz. to 3, chicken size has been reduced. Fruit is being shipped with too much preservative. Vegetables arrive in a condition not fit to eat. Dairy products are outdated. Chef's choice and the popular theme meals are coming under close monetary scrutiny.

At the press conference, Cielo Lizasuain Jr., a cook in Stiles & Morse colleges, showed those gathered a menu from Super Bowl Sunday. It said Yale was serving "All-Beef Hot Dogs." Cielo then showed the box, which revealed that Yale had served "Pork & Beef hot dogs."

Mike Schoen, a cook at Yale University for 23 years, currently in Berkeley College, said, "We're the ones who prepare the food. We are also the ones who have seen Yale's

standards decline. There was a time when we were proud of the meals we provided. Now, we have to serve Steak-Ums. Now, I'm serving food that would be served in prisons or public schools."

"Morale is low inside the dining halls," said Kenny Brown, a cook in Calhoun College. "We're being mismanaged, and Yale is setting up the cooks to look bad. We are trying our best to preserve high standards, but Yale just does not provide the resources."

"Yale has tried to wash their hands of responsibility by bringing in Aramark," said Bob Proto, president of Local 35. "Yale can change this. Yale should go back to its original tradition of high standards in our dining halls."

The Members Speak ...

RosaAnna DeFilippis

I am a graduate researcher in Molecular Biophysics and Biochemistry. I research a human virus that leads to cervical cancer in women, and I look for ways to reverse this process. For 10 hours a day (often 6 days a week!) I am in the lab planning, performing and analyzing experiments. The excitement of making a new discovery and pushing forward the frontiers of medical science makes my job fulfilling. I cannot imagine doing anything else.

In addition to research, I have also taught biochemistry as a teaching assistant (TA) for an undergraduate course. When I was a TA, I still spent all that time in lab, but spent an additional 20 hours a week preparing and holding discussion sections, writing and grading weekly tests, and meeting one-on-one with students. Like the research I do every day, teaching is exciting and rewarding.

I organize for GESO because I want to be a part of making the decisions that affect



my work. The union gives teachers and researchers a voice. This allows scientists to make sure good work is being done on all diseases—not just those that pharmaceutical companies will pay Yale to research. This allows all teachers to make sure the quality of education stays strong and is not sacrificed for Yale's bottom line.

The administration's opposition to GESO makes it hard to be a union organizer. I talk to science graduate teachers and researchers every day, and many of them agree with the union, but are afraid to join. Yale University should not be a place where people are afraid to stand up for what they believe in. Thank goodness the fear does not win: People in the sciences and across Yale are joining the union, so that we can have a voice at work.

Valicia Phillips

I work as a patient care associate (PCA) at Yale-New Haven Psychiatric Hospital. I also am raising my daughter Ikea and my son Harry as a single parent. It is impossible for me to raise my children in the way that I would like on the money that I make at Yale.

I used to work at the Yale Psychiatric Institute (YPI) as a casual employee, back when it was a part of Yale University. When the university sold the facility to the Hospital and got rid of the union, my pay was cut by \$3.50 an hour.

Patient care has suffered without the union. I have gone from doing psychotherapy groups and meeting individually with patients to doing urines and bloods and running errands. My co-workers and I complain almost daily about the problems we encounter, but nothing changes. Now we are changing things for ourselves by organizing a union.

I hope that the hospital administration will stop treating us like we don't matter. I ask that the rest of the workers at Yale stand up with us, and make Yale respect our right to organize.



Scholarships Available

The Connecticut State AFL-CIO

An annual \$500 tuition award for union members or their children.

To apply, forward a copy of your high-school transcript, evidence of application/acceptance to an accredited college or university, and an essay of 500 words or less on the topic "What effect will the 2000 Presidential election have on working people?" to:

Kershner Awards Committee
Labor Education Center
Box U-13
University of Connecticut
Storrs, CT 06269

Closing date for final submission of all papers is May 7, 2001.

Greater New Haven Central Labor Council

Two college scholarships will be awarded to union members or their children.

For an application, ask Meg Riccio at the Local 35 office (865-3259) or pick one up at:

Greater New Haven Central Labor Council
267 Chapel Street
New Haven, CT 06513
(203) 777-2756

Joint Local 34 & 35 Membership Meeting Wednesday, March 28, 2001 (after work)

Local 35

Members gather at 4:45pm in the First and Summerfield Methodist Church for Local 35 business. At 5:30pm, Local 35 will march over to Woolsey Hall to join Local 34.

Local 34

Members gather at 5:15pm in Woolsey Hall for Local 34 business. At 5:45pm, we will be joined by Local 35.

We will take an important vote concerning our support for the organizing efforts of Yale's hospital workers and graduate teachers. This vote will set the course as we head into this year's contract negotiations. Please attend this meeting!

www.yaleunions.org

We're on the Web!

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