A couple of weeks ago I was busy congratulating myself because I had actually sat down at my computer and knocked out a considerable portion of what I thought would be my article for December’s UPM newsletter. It wasn’t very good, but oh well! It seems that the most difficult part of writing for me is thinking of a topic and actually just sitting down to start it, and I had done that. And with finals coming and all of us in the Science Center about to move to the new building, I felt relieved that I had made a good start.

Then, last week the media was all abuzz about the prospect of Michigan passing Right to Work legislation, making it the 24th U.S. state to become a Right to Work state. On Tuesday, the legislation was rushed through in a lame duck session (there will be fewer Republicans during the next session) and Governor Rick Snyder signed it into law within hours amid uproar and demonstrations on a par with what had happened in Wisconsin earlier in the year. Of all the disturbing aspects of this development, one that is striking is that just weeks ago the leader of the state senate and the governor had both come out in opposition to Right to Work in Michigan, but after the election they were threatened by big money lobbying, and the rest is history.

In case you don’t know what Right to Work is, it’s the right to work FOR LESS. Right to Work sounds >
reasonable, doesn’t it? But its meaning is about as misleading as the phrase “collateral damage” is when referring to innocent civilians killed by American troops. Right to Work legislation makes it illegal for union shops to require employees to join unions or to pay union dues or representation fees, greatly impeding a union’s ability to organize or legally represent their unit members.

It seemed to me that I just had to shelve my first article. Michigan…. the state where I was born - Home of the United Auto Workers! Many people feel that Michigan is the place where the modern labor movement really took root.

I grew up in a metropolitan community where huge numbers of people belonged to labor unions, my father included. There were abundant middle class neighborhoods with excellent parks, museums, and public schools, where art, music and other enriching courses were the norm rather than the exception. A family could live comfortably on one income. The chasm between rich and middle class was, compared to the present, very small. Mitt Romney’s childhood home was only a couple of miles from the house where I grew up. The wonderful public library that we visited was just a stone’s throw from the Romney home. The pay gap between worker and CEO was much, much smaller than it is now. Of course, things were not perfect, but people could get a good college education without going into tremendous debt, and union workers began to have healthcare coverage so that they never needed to go bankrupt because of the misfortune of falling ill.

Union membership reached its peak in the 1950s in post World War II United States, approximately 35% of the labor force. As of 2011, however, union membership was down to 11.8%. In the same year, in the private sector, this membership number was only 6.9%. Clearly there has been a dramatic decline in U.S. union membership in the past 60 years, which has left rank-and-file workers without a powerful public advocate. When union wages and benefits go down, the wages and benefits of the rest of the workforce follow. We can see how our economy is struggling now with a hollowed-out middle class.

Right to Work states tend to have higher employment rates (proponents use this fact to sell it) but lower wages. According to a recent article in the Wall Street Journal, private sector pay in Right to Work states was 9.8% lower than in other states. Unemployment is lower in Right to Work states by about the same percentage. Indeed, people in these states are employed in more WalMart types of jobs where the workers are so poorly compensated that the companies actually advise their employees about how to apply for food stamps and other government programs. So the taxpayers (YOU!) are subsidizing WalMart-type workers so that billionaires like the Walton family members can grow ever richer, even as they are unwilling to pay their workers a living wage. Of the 10 states with the highest per capita incomes, all but 1 are not Right to Work states. Of the 10 states with the best worker healthcare coverage, all but 2 are not Right to Work states. Of the top 20 fastest growing states, all but 3 are not Right to Work states.

Such cheery news, just as we are about to get a well-deserved break and go home to celebrate the holidays with family and friends! I didn’t mean to put such a large lump of coal in your holiday season newsletter, but, alas, there it is.

So now, after this rather sooty article, I do, indeed, wish you all a very happy, healthy, restful holiday season! I hope we can all come back refreshed and ready to try to make a small difference in this world, the world of our students.

And, as always, stay in touch, stay informed, stay involved.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!!!!!
EDITORIAL

“A thing of beauty is a joy for ever:
Its loveliness increases; it will never
Pass into nothingness…”

Perhaps Keats was mistaken – at least when it comes to the College of Marin – where what once was a place of beauty is fast becoming a cesspit of ugliness.

How did it happen, and who should be held accountable, that our jewel-like campus has been so altered with facilities that are neither in keeping with our beautiful surrounds nor which properly serve the needs of our students?

Blaming the architects and engineers is like faulting the guillotine for a beheading.

The real responsibility lies with those of our Trustees who initiated this modernization program and who were snookered into approving these designs.

While it’s too late to undo the violence that has been inflicted on our campuses, (IVC included), at least we can hold the guilty trustees accountable for their incompetence at the next Board election.

If you would like to show your displeasure by helping turn out the trustees who played the major role in this disgrace, please consider a contribution to our UPM Political Action Committee (UPMPAC) through Payroll deduction, or with a check made out to UPMPAC delivered to our Union office. We intend to campaign to defeat and replace these trustees with trustees who have some aesthetic sensibility and who have a respect for the needs of our students, our faculty, our community and our environment.

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**United Professors of Marin**

**UPM-PAC Payroll Deduction Form**

The UPM-PAC (Political Action Committee) provides financial support to candidates and measures that support or benefit education in Marin County and the College of Marin in particular. If you would like to support the UPM-PAC with a monthly contribution, small or large, please fill out the form below and send it to the Payroll Office.

To: Payroll, College of Marin

Date: __________

I hereby authorize the Marin Community College to deduct from my earnings the sum of __________ beginning in the month of __________ (year), and each month thereafter, and to remit this sum to the United Professors of Marin PAC #990958 until I revoke this authorization in writing.

Signature: __________________________________________

Print Name: __________________________________________

Address: ____________________________________________

City: ________________________________________________

Zip: _________________________________________________

SSN: ________________________________________________
TIPPING POINTS
by Paul da Silva

Over the last few years, the news on the public education front in California has been dismal at best. However, there is now a new hope that we may have hit bottom and are at the beginning of an upswing. What caused the change? Does anybody know?

I offer one explanation. During November, here on the CoM campus in Kentfield, members of UPM and CSEA staffed a table in front of the library. The goal was to distribute information about Proposition 30 during the noon hour to as many people as possible. Although we missed a few days and hours here and there, we did reach many people, and most were very receptive and supportive. One group, however, was clearly not participating. This was the group that had the most at stake – the students.

The day before the election, when I had almost given up hope that this group would wake up, two young women came up to the table, full of energy and enthusiasm. “This is important,” they said. “We have forty minutes before our next class, and we want to do something to help.” We discussed the campaign for a few minutes, during which time these students lamented the apathy of many of their colleagues on campus. Then, one abruptly said, “We are going to take this stack of flyers and divide it in two. I will walk clockwise around the campus and my friend will walk the other way. We will give a flyer to every single student we see. We have to do this!”

If things really are changing for the better, this is why. I am not suggesting that these two students alone changed the outcome of the election. However, if we consider that the election was very close, and that similar stories were unfolding on campuses up and down California, then it is not a stretch to conclude that efforts by small groups of determined people really did make a difference.

A strategic force applied at the right place and time can shift large masses. The point where it has its effect is called the “tipping point.” The victory of Proposition 30 itself is now cited as evidence that the people of California are willing to invest once more in education. This conclusion may in turn move a larger mass of politicians, legislation and funds in the right direction.

Here at CoM, we have had some critical tipping points in our recent past. A certain Board of Trustees election comes to mind. This raises the question of what the next tipping point might be. The early retirement package may be it.

On one hand, the retirement of so many of our senior faculty may greatly weaken the institutional experience, memory and perspective that so many have been struggling to preserve. On the other hand, if we who remain on the faculty do everything we can to encourage them, maybe enough of these “elder statesmen (and women)” will stay in touch and help to mentor the next generation, and thus help the college reach new levels of excellence. Who knows? Maybe one can even be persuaded to run in the next election for the Board. □
With the SERP retirement package now all but concluded (see below), your UPM Bargaining Team is looking forward to 2013 when we will begin negotiating the next contract. Please keep your eyes out for our request for Membership input. We’ll make this request early in 2013.

Though we had little luck concluding existing sidebars with former HR directors Linda Beam and Anita Morris, President Coon has assured UPM that he will make the outstanding sidebars a priority early in 2013 once the new HR director is on board. We look forward to working with a competent and intelligent HR director, something we have missed in the past years.

The SEPR Retirement Incentive is moving forward. With 20 unit members committing to retirement, the District adjusted the required number of retirees from 22 to 20 to take advantage of the savings that will result from fewer people at or near the top of the salary schedule, and last Tuesday (12/11/12) the Board unanimously approved the adjustment. We are also working on a sidebar to the Retirement Incentive that will continue medical benefits for eligible retirees and their dependents (including domestic partners) during their two semesters of “return rights.”

The UPM Bargaining Team wishes to acknowledge the good work of retirees and active unit members over the course of 2012. We will be here in 2013 to represent you at the bargaining table when we resume negotiations. With Marin County supplemental taxes looking good, the savings from the recent retirements should put us in a strong position to talk about wage increases.

Have a prosperous and healthy New Year!
PART-TIME FACULTY CAN RECEIVE UNEMPLOYMENT PAY DURING BREAKS

As a result of the 1989 Cervisi Decision, most part-time faculty are eligible to receive unemployment compensation during breaks in their employment. Examples are: winter and summer breaks or a semester during which they are not offered employment, if they are not employed elsewhere and if they do not have “reasonable assurance of returning to work with an education institution following the period without employment” (Code 1253.3). Since College of Marin part-time employment is contingent upon enrollment and not guaranteed, no "reasonable assurance" of re-employment can be guaranteed. Thus, most CoM part-time faculty are eligible for unemployment pay. The fact that some individuals have a history of being re-employed at the end of a summer or holiday recess between terms is irrelevant. Applying for unemployment benefits is your legal right!

How to Apply for Unemployment Benefits:

1. On your first day of unemployment, or as soon as possible thereafter, call or go to an Employment Development Department (EDD) office. You do not have to wait for your paychecks to stop to file your application. You will be given forms to determine if you are eligible (actually unemployed and paid qualifying wages during the required base period).
2. Bring with you a copy of your current appointment letter or load sheet, which specifies the beginning and ending date of employment. Also, it is wise to bring a copy of the class schedule and/or official campus calendar.
3. Upon receiving your claim, EDD will contact the college to confirm your employment status and ask if you have "reasonable assurance" of returning to work. In some cases, Human Resources staff may assume that part-time instructors will be rehired and tell EDD that you will be returning. If the college informs EDD that a person is returning or still employed, then EDD is likely to deny benefits. If this happens, you should file an appeal. The Cervisi Decision assures your right to unemployment benefits.
“FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORDER”
A SAMPLING OF MYTH, MIRTH AND MISCELLANY FOR THE UNION FAITHFUL

BOOK REVIEWS

If you are looking for some (belated) seasonal gifts, here are two great books that you might consider.

“All Labor has Dignity” is a new collection of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s lectures and speeches to and about labor unions. Many people may not be aware that Dr. King was as committed to economic justice as he was to ending racial segregation. Throughout his life he fought to connect the labor and civil rights movements, envisioning them as twin pillars for social reform. Award winning historian Michael K. Honey traces Dr. King’s dream of economic equality – his involvement with the “Poor People’s Campaign” and his support of striking black sanitation workers in Memphis. This book “is not just a testament to Dr. King’s rhetorical legacy – it is a call to action.” [Richard L. Trumka, President, AFL-CIO]

And there’s a delightful children’s book (ages 3 to 7) that can educate kids about labor solidarity. “Click, Clack, Moo: Cows That Type.” It seems that Farmer Brown has a problem. All day long he hears click, clack, moo... click, clack, moo, coming from the barn. He understands what it’s all about when he receives a typewritten note from the cows. They say they’re cold and they want electric blankets. No blankets, they say, no milk! No way says Farmer Brown. But then the hens join in, and the ducks, and before long Farmer Brown gets a lesson in labor solidarity. And you and your kids will also. Charming and beautifully illustrated.

UPM GETS NEW DIGS!

As a result of swing-space changes, our UPM office is moving from Science 136 to TB 124, Dean Arnold’s old office in the temporary building that also houses the campus police. It’s a larger space and we now have windows. It’s your union office, so come visit, don’t be a stranger.

* * *

JUST CURIOUS

How come, after 6 months, the District is still unable to tell us where the promised $625,000 cuts on the non-instructional (administration) side of the ledger will be coming from, to balance the $625,000 that they’ve taken from our instructional programs?

* * *

“Trade-unions have done more for humanity than any other organization of men [and women] that has ever existed. They have done more for decency, for honesty, for education, for the betterment of the race and for the developing of character, than any other association of human beings.

- Clarence Darrow
UPM FACULTY MEMBERSHIP MEETING

FRIDAY, JANUARY 11, 2013
FUSSELMAN HALL, ROOM 120
12:45 – 1:30

ANNOUNCEMENTS – QUESTIONS – DISCUSSION