PONDERINGS OF THE PRESIDENT
By Laurie Ordin

HAPPY FALL 2013 SEMESTER TO EVERYONE! Welcome to all of our new members and welcome back to all of our old (and not so old) members. I hope you had a restful summer vacation and are ready to inspire a new cohort of students here at CoM.

Those of you who are returning are probably aware that I often use these first couple of pages of our newsletter to rant and rave about some of the current issues of the day that are driving me a little crazy. To our newest members, this is just a warning about what you are in for. I may refer back to previous columns and you should know that all of the newsletters are archived at www.unitedprofessorsofmarin.org. There, along with my columns, you will find our current contract, a wealth of information about bargaining updates, interesting historical labor tidbits, important tips, lists of UPM jobholders (just in case you need help) and occasional bits and pieces of the communist manifesto...just kidding....well, sort of...

And now for my latest rant. I think I should call this one “Things I Don’t Understand.” Let’s

begin with my hometown, Detroit, MI. Let’s see. My home town, has just declared bankruptcy. As part of the deal, led by Republican Governor Rick Snyder, officials are planning on cutting the pensions of municipal workers whose average said pensions amount to about $19,000/yr. These are pensions that were promised to public employees. These pensions are really the retirement savings of people who worked for the good of the public, who worked for modest incomes, counting on the pensions that were promised to them so that they would be able to live in dignity >>>
when they are no longer able to work. Gee, those workers are a lot like us!

At the same time Snyder has just renewed a pledge to subsidize, to the tune of $283 million, a new hockey stadium for the Detroit Red Wings. The Red Wings are owned by multi-billionaire Mike Illitch, owner of Little Caesar’s Pizza. His family is worth $2.7 billion. I guess he needs the help more than those greedy public employees. I just got a sudden urge to do the math.

$283,000,000/$19,000 per pension = 14,894 pensions. Someone stop me before I hurt myself!

Here’s another thing I don’t understand. Over time, the Glass–Steagall Act has been dismantled. Mortgage schemes were concocted, which amounted to a license for fraud for the big American banks. These actions led to the nearly complete collapse of the U.S. economy, but the big banks were bailed out by the taxpayers because they were “too big to fail.” The banks turned around and gave unbelievable bonuses to the brainchilds (or would that be brainchildren?) who hatched these schemes. And what happened to all the little folks who got mortgages for houses with obscenely bloated price tags, based on a false economy? Well, unless you’ve been living under a rock, (What’s that, you say? You had one of those mortgages and now you ARE living under a rock? Well...sorry!) I think you know the answer. Now some of those big banks have merged and they are now even too bigger to fail.

Here’s the final head scratcher for this piece...speaking of too big to fail. The biggest community college in California, our neighbor, CCSF, has just been given notice by ACCJC that it is about to lose its accreditation. This is happening despite the fact that CCSF is known for delivering a quality education to its 85,000 students (see Ponderings, UPM Newsletter, July 2013.) Is CCSF being bailed out by the taxpayers? Well, some of us are trying. There have been state and city bond measures passed that would help restore badly needed funds to CCSF, but here’s the catch. If a college loses its accreditation, it is then illegal for it to receive state funds. Without these funds, CCSF will almost certainly be forced to close. Too big to fail? Not in this case.

So what are we doing about this at CoM? I am proud to announce that we passed a hat at our annual post-convocation UPM luncheon. You generously opened your wallets to fund an ad in the SF Chronicle that we, along with our Bay 10 brothers and sisters, are hoping to run in support of CCSF and condemning the actions of ACCJC. Some of the tactics that led to these actions are now being brought into question by the U.S. Department of Education, and as of this writing, attorneys for CCSF have just filed a lawsuit against ACCJC. But these actions do not seem to faze ACCJC. They insist that their CCSF decision will stand.

Nonetheless, I am hopeful. My hat was filled with donations, large and small. I was particularly touched by the number of bills in my hat. It was clear to me that we had many, many members donating. I know the kids need shoes and braces. College tuitions and rent need to be paid. But so many of you felt it was important to participate and that says a lot. TOGETHER, we can stand up and speak out.

If you weren’t able to attend our luncheon and would like to help us make a strong statement in support of CCSF, or if you were there but would like to increase your contribution, you can contact Arthur Lutz or Paul da Silva, our co-chairs of UPMPAC. You can also leave a donation at our UPM office, TB124.

And, as always, stay in touch, stay informed, and stay involved.
At this year’s Convocation on August 16th, the keynote speaker was Dr. Darla Cooper, Director of Research for the RPGroup, a private research and planning group that provides technical assistance to California community colleges. She spoke on the topic of “student success.”

According to Dr. Cooper there are 6 factors that contribute to student success – the two most important of these being:

1. That students have a well thought out educational direction and career goal, and,
2. That students stay focused on this goal throughout their time at college, keeping their “eyes on the prize.”

The responsibility of the college faculty and administration then, according to Dr. Cooper, would be to assist students in reaching their targeted goal.

But perhaps there is another way of defining success at community college. Rather than the ability of students to define a direction and pursue a specific career goal, how about defining community college as a place where students can engage in open-ended exploration, not necessarily tied to some pre-determined fixed “prize.”

If one would accept this kind of definition of success, then maybe a college’s role in helping students would assume a different character, one with less emphasis on degree or certificate statistics, or on transfer rates – and with fewer restrictions on course repeatability.

In other words, maybe community college should be a place where students are encouraged to take an unhurried journey of discovery, rather than insisting that they make rigid career choices and be given a hasty and possibly premature boot out the door if they show indecision.

Dr. Cooper’s definition of “student success” seems to conform nicely to the current “no child left behind” philosophy of the school reform movement, but as faculty, shouldn’t we be encouraging our students to pursue education for its own intrinsic value – with “culture” as the real prize? □
COLLECTIVE BARGAINING UPDATE
John Sutherland, UPM Chief Negotiator

At our opening meeting on August 13, we discussed ground rules for negotiations and set future dates for bargaining. President Coon welcomed both bargaining teams and set a respectful and hopeful tone for up-coming meetings, by saying that the college had turned the fiscal corner, and he was optimistic that the UPM membership would benefit as a result. As well, HR Director Kristina Combs is investigating options that will allow us to maintain and perhaps even improve current health care benefits.

As we’ve recently reported, UPM has, through membership input, identified the following seven Articles to open in this round of Contract negotiations:
- Art. 1 Recognition
- Art. 3 Wages
- Art. 4 Benefits
- Art. 5 Leaves
- Art. 6 Transfers and assignments
- Art. 8 Workload,
- Art. 27 Privacy and Personal Property Rights. (We’re proposing this as a new Article).

The District, in turn, has opened these nine Articles:
- Art. 1 Recognition
- Art. 3 Wages
- Art. 4 Benefits
- Art. 5 Leaves
- Art. 6 Transfers and Assignments
- Art. 7 Evaluation
- Art. 8 Workload
- Art. 9 Calendar
- Art. 10 Class Size

We have set meetings in September for each side to begin clarification of the above Articles, and we will provide details of our progress as promptly as we can.

Please see our UPM Website to you want to view our current contract; www.unitedprofessorsofmarin.org. Or scan our QR Code:

“POWER CONCEDES NOTHING WITHOUT A DEMAND; IT NEVER HAS AND IT NEVER WILL.”
- FREDERICK DOUGLASS
UPMPAC UPDATE

At our UPM General Membership Meeting on August 16th (after a bountiful lunch) our union president Laurie Ordin and our UPM Political Action Committee (UPMPAC) Co-Chair, Paul da Silva, appealed for contributions for a possible UPM ad in the SF Chronicle in support of our faculty colleagues, students and staff at CCSF, threatened with the loss of accreditation. (See Laurie’s “Ponderings” column on Pgs. 1 and 2.)

Thank you all for your generosity. We collected $538 in Laurie’s hat. While that is not sufficient to pay the many thousands of dollars necessary for an ad of meaningful visibility, we are contacting other Bay Area faculty unions in hopes that with their participation, we can run an ad that will show region-wide union support for our San Francisco colleagues in their struggle with ACCJC.

If you are able to help with additional support, please bring any cash contributions to our Union office, TB 124, or help by contributing via the Payroll Deduction form below.

What happens at CCSF will surely affect us at CoM, because -- WE ARE ALL CCSF!

---

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: ________________________________
POETRY CORNER

Poetry in a Union Newsletter?

Sure! There have always been poets who have used their craft to speak to the same demands that the American labor movement has struggled to achieve – justice, equity and a democratic workplace.

And some of these poets suffered similar fates to those in the labor movement who gave their lives fighting for the rights of working people.

The poet Pablo Neruda died fighting for a democratic Chile in the 1970s.

Neruda wrote powerful indictments of autocratic regimes in Chile and abroad. In 1937 he wrote the following about the fascist assault on the working class in Spain during the Spanish Civil War:

“You will ask: And where are the lilacs
And the metaphysics petalled with poppies
And the rain repeatedly spattering its words,
filling them with holes and birds?
You will ask why my poetry
Does not speak of dreams and leaves,
And the great volcanoes on my birthplace.

Come and see the blood in the streets.
Come and see
The blood in the streets.
Come and see the blood
In the streets!”

* * *

Blood still flows in streets around the world, and there is suffering in our own country as workers are losing their jobs and homes. For those who might be slightly poetry-phobic, Pablo Neruda’s work shows that poetry can really matter. □

UPM’S NEW SOCIAL COMMITTEE

We are pleased to announce the formation of the Ad Hoc UPM Social Committee, the purpose of which is to organize some fun events where we can get to know each other better and create faculty solidarity. The committee is composed of the following members:

Radica Ostojic-Portello (who along with being a foreign language teacher always wanted to be a party planner.)
Vaughn Ariano
Tom Behr (who makes wonderful award-winning pies.)
Caitlin Escobar
David Patterson

Thank you all for volunteering. □

UPM AREA REPRESENTATIVES

At our post convocation luncheon, we distributed a sign-up sheet requesting volunteers to serve as Area Representatives. These reps will each be assigned to stay in touch with a small group of faculty and become acquainted with their needs and concerns.

The following have volunteered so far:
John Erdman, Patrick Kelly, Kristin Perrone, Maureen Biggart, John Petrovsky, Jeannine Williams, Fernando Agudelo-Silva, Paul da Silva, John Jacob; Michele Martinisi, John Marmysz, John Sutherland, Nadia Sanko, Deborah Graham, Kenny Buquen, Arthur Lutz, Bonnie Borenstein, Laurie Ordin.

Many thanks to those of you who signed-up, but we would still like additional volunteers. If you wish to volunteer, please contact Laurie at laurie@unitedprofessorsofmarin.org if you are able to help out. □
AUGUST LABOR HISTORY

On August 19th 1909 the first edition of the IWW’s *Little Red Song Book*, was published.

Admitting women, Blacks, and immigrants before most other unions, the IWW (*Industrial Workers of the World*), “the Wobblies” were labor pioneers and innovators, unionizing hundreds of thousands of workers previously regarded as "unorganizable."

The Wobblies organized the first sit-down strike (1906); the first major auto strike (1911); the first strike to shut down all three coalfields in Colorado (1927); and the first transit-workers' job-action (1944).

With their insistence on union democracy, the IWW contributed many of the brightest pages in the annals of working class history.

The following were and are, members of the IWW: Helen Keller, Eugene Debs, David Dellinger (Chicago Seven), Dorothy Day (Catholic Worker Movement), Eugene O’Neill, (Playwright), Kenneth Rexroth, Joe Hill, and Noam Chomsky. The IWW is the current bargaining agent for the workers at Starbucks.

SOME LABOR HUMOR

A postal clerk sorting mail comes across an unstamped, poorly hand-written envelope addressed to God. She opens it and discovers it is from an elderly lady, distressed because some thief robbed her of 100 dollars. She will be cold and hungry for the rest of the month if she doesn’t receive some divine intervention.

The clerk organizes a collection amongst the other postal workers, who dig deep and come up with 96 dollars, which they get to her overnight, by Express Mail.

A week later the clerk recognizes the same handwriting on another envelope addressed to God. She opens it and reads: “Dear God, thank you for the 100 dollars. This month would have been so bleak without it. P.S. It was four dollars short, but that was probably those thieving postal workers.”

SOME POST OFFICE TRIVIA

Did you know that the “motto” of the U.S. Postal Service “Neither snow nor rain nor heat...” etc. etc., is a translation from the works of Herodotus describing the expedition of the Greeks against the Persians under Cyrus in 500 B.C.E. The Persians operated a system of mounted postal couriers, and the sentence describes the fidelity with which their work was done. Kudos to Herodotus for honoring labor.

CORRECTION

In last month’s Newsletter editorial it was reported that the ACCJC “receives funding from ALEC and other right wing groups.” While it is true that ACCJC does receive funds from “right wing” groups like The Lumina Foundation, (who funds ALEC) there is no evidence that ACCJC receives direct funding from ALEC. I apologize for the error. Ed.
DON'T END UP WEARING A NON-UNION COLLAR
JOIN UPM AND BE "UNION AND PROUD"

UPM MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

I hereby apply for membership in the United Professors of Marin, AFT Local 1610

Name: __________________________ SS#: __________________________
Address: _________________________ City: ____________ Zip: ____________
Date: ____________ Email: __________________________
Home Phone: ____________ Campus Ext: ______

Check the appropriate category:

____ I am a permanent credit or non-credit employee or leave replacement
____ I am a temporary credit or non-credit employee on the semester system
____ I am a Community Education instructor

Return to the UPM mailbox or to the UPM Office, TB-124.
And please make sure you have completed the UPM payroll deduction option, in Human Resources.

Please Note: Unless you have filled out the above UPM Membership Application, you are only paying a representation fee and you are not a member of UPM and entitled to UPM's full membership benefit.