PONDERINGS OF THE PRESIDENT
By Laurie Ordin

Usually, I like to write about things in the news that perplex me because I find them fascinating (like not being able to keep from gawking at an accident at the side of the road) and I hope you might find these columns at least a bit more interesting than reading your cereal box and milk carton in the morning. Most of these topics are about national issues, but this month, since they say “All politics is local.” and “Think globally and act locally.” we’re going to go local. Besides, a number of you have asked me about the following:

In a matter of days we will be asked to elect local officials, including three members to the Board of Trustees of College of Marin. In fact, if you vote absentee, you have already received your ballot and perhaps you have already voted. Then, of course, there is the distinct possibility that, on your CoM salary, you couldn’t dream of being able to afford to live in this county. But if you are one of the lucky ones who have been able to manage to find a place to live here, you are in the somewhat unique position that you are able to play a part in electing your own future bosses.

There are four people running for three seats. Three of the candidates are incumbents:

Diana Conti, Barbara Dolan, and Wanden Treanor. The fourth candidate is Brady Bevis. Wanden Treanor, Diana Conti and Brady Bevis all approached the UPM Executive Council and asked for our endorsement, so the Executive Council decided to invite all of the candidates for individual question and answer meetings.

We decided to endorse Diana Conti. If you recall, Diana had come to UPM to ask for our endorsement when she first ran for the Board of Trustees and won four years ago. After interviewing her, we gave her our support and, in
general, we have been very pleased with the result. Diana has been a smart and clear thinking addition to our Board. Additionally, and I think not coincidentally, the day after she was elected, Fran White announced her retirement as President of College of Marin. In my opinion, that retirement put an end to what might just be the darkest period that CoM has ever seen.

For those of you who missed this fun time, (the Fran White era) it was filled with lawsuits, arbitrations, and enough grievances to make your head spin. For example, at one point in time we were able to look at a survey of the other community colleges in CA. The average number of grievances filed at that time by a faculty union was 1. There were a few districts that had 2 and one had 3 at that time. We had 13! Prior to the White years, if a unit member thought that there might be a contract violation, the member and grievance officer would go to the HR director and very often, by working together, things could be ironed out so that all would leave the process satisfied. During the White years, when we approached HR, their response was “so sue us.” And so we did. And we won every arbitration. One of the settlement amounts was $2.4 million. This was a huge waste of time and college resources, not to say anything about how much it cost our union.

We were without a contract for several years during the Fran White era and, after repeatedly coming to the bargaining table and finding that the District’s only response to our demands was “no,” we were eventually forced into a process called “fact finding.” Fact finding usually lasts from 1 to 3 days. Ours, the most protracted in California community college history, lasted for over a year. This process also cost the college and UPM dearly in terms of wasted dollars and time. Our last UPM President, Ira Lansing, used to regularly report in this newsletter on the amount CoM was spending on legal fees in an effort to defeat our union. Over the years of our contract dispute, the dollar amount would come to over $1 million.

Larry Frierson, the District’s attorney, was the highest paid person in the District. Think about the classes that could have run, or the raise we could have gotten for this money!

This was also a time of deep mistrust within the campus community. People were fired mysteriously and some (definitely not all) of the people who were hired seemed to lack qualifications other than their willingness to say yes to whatever President White wanted. President White trashed the faculty, her employees, in the press. A few of the choice comments published were, “A handful of faculty dissenters has held the college hostage for the last 30 years.” “They engage in bullying, unprofessional behavior, personal attacks, racism and sexism.” “They are doing everything they can to kill the institution.” (Pacific Sun, 2/22/08 and 3/28/08)

Investigations of faculty members into racism allegations were conducted by White, but they were found to be without merit. Nevertheless, the atmosphere on campus was acidic.

Why am I dredging up all of this unpleasantness? Since Diana Conti’s election things have really turned around. We have a new, well liked and respected leader, President Coon. Things are not perfect, but I know of nobody who doesn’t think that things have improved dramatically. When issues come up for UPM, every attempt is made to resolve things amicably. We feel that we are all working together toward a common goal.

So what was the UPM Executive Council’s decision about endorsing Wanden Treanor, Brady Bevis and Barbara Dolan? Well, we are taking a cautious approach. Ms. Dolan did not ask for our support and we are not giving it.

As for the others, during Fran White’s tenure, Ms. Treanor was a very strong supporter of White, and we are still smarting from the attacks of that time. Ms. Treanor asked us to support Ms. Bevis.
Both of these women are intelligent and I hope, if they win, CoM will continue on a path that is positive. But we are going to wait and see. We are now in contract negotiations and, depending on how they go, we may be able to see if Ms. Treanor is more supportive of faculty than she has been in the past.

We will also be able to make a more informed decision about Brady Bevis. It would be good to be able to endorse two more capable women in the future.

We shall see. In the meantime, stay in touch, stay informed, and stay involved.

AND VOTE! UPM Executive Council endorses ONLY Diana Conti for CoM Board of Trustees. □
EDITORIAL

As reported by our chief negotiator in his bargaining update, UPM and the District are currently engaged in bargaining a successor agreement to the CBA that expired on June 30, 2013.

Based on input from our faculty, our bargaining team has proposed contract changes and enhancements that we believe are important and necessary to keep our faculty and our college at parity with other cutting edge community colleges in California.

These enhancements include a fair and equitable pay increase for all faculty based on Full-Time - Part-Time parity; as well as changes in Transfers and Assignments; Benefits; Leaves; Workload; and Computer Privacy.

For their part, the District has opened 9 Articles that they want to re-negotiate, including Wages and Benefits.

We hope that Greg Nelson, our new Vice-president of College Operations, will honor the commitment he made to the IJ on 8-28, when he stated that increasing tax revenue from the county and state will insure that the District will not seek any employee concessions from CoM bargaining units.

Indeed! With a nearly 4% increase in Marin County property tax income, the question of a fair and equitable faculty pay raise should be a no-brainer, especially since the faculty at Santa Rosa JC recently negotiated a 5.30% wage increase for 2013 - 2014.

What perhaps is more in doubt and troubling however are the District’s intentions regarding our Fringe Benefits. Noises coming from their side seem to suggest that the District might be proposing adverse changes to our health-care plans.

Let’s hope that the District understands and appreciates that this is an issue of great significance and importance for our faculty and that our bargaining team is committed to retaining meaningful District provided medical coverage for our faculty. □
UPM BARGAINING UPDATE
John Sutherland, UPM Chief Negotiator

The UPM Bargaining Team has met with the District in contract negotiations over the past months, taking to the table demands from our membership. In return, the District has opened mostly the same, but also a few different Articles. We are currently in negotiations on Article 1.

Initially, the District wanted to decrease the overall number of coordinator positions and units that support those positions, but after serious discussions with your UPM Team, it changed its course and proposed several additional coordinator positions, for a net change of +10 units. The District, of course, decides which coordinator positions to fund, so the additional positions are still subject to District approval for funding. The UPM team has submitted its demands on additional coordinators as well.

Elsewhere in Article 1, UPM has put 100% credit and non-credit pro-rata pay on the table. The District is running the numbers, and we expect to hear back on this Article soon. We’ve also made the demand for 100% pro-rata pay for full-time instructors on overload and/or summer contracts. Here, too, the District is running the numbers.

Outside of the sunshined Articles for negotiations, UPM and the District are currently discussing a sidebar on Article 7, Evaluations. Due to the wave of recent (and unrequited past) retirements, evaluations for full-time instructors have become problematic. Here it should be acknowledged that President Coon has been making headway towards the 75-25% rule though we’re still a long way from being in compliance with it.

The problem in Evaluations is that the Contract mandates that the Evaluation Team for both probationary and permanent unit members have as Peer Evaluator “a qualified, permanent unit member in the same or a closely related discipline who has not been previously evaluated by the Evaluatee.” A moment’s thought will expose the, in quite a few cases, hopelessness of conducting a valid evaluation: Some disciplines simply do not have enough permanent unit members to make an evaluation possible. UPM has drafted language and we’re currently meeting with the District to get this issue resolved quickly.

As we make progress on any of the above items we’ll keep you posted. □
NEITHER IS GOVERNOR BROWN’S SIGNATURE ON ASSEMBLY BILL 955; THE TWO-TIER FEE SYSTEM FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGES.

The following statement was sent on behalf of CFT president Joshua Pechthalt:

“Community college faculty are deeply disappointed that the Governor signed AB 955 into law. While the stated motivation for this pilot project is to accommodate demand for popular classes, and create greater student access to affordable higher education, its effect will be the opposite.

AB 955 opens the door to a two-tier fee system in community colleges by authorizing one or more colleges to charge its students exorbitant fees for intersession courses as a “pilot project.” AB 955 fees will run over $750 for a typical 3-unit community college course. Current fees for this course are $138.

By raising student fees in even one college dramatically, AB 955 will effectively deny equal, open access to the working class Californians who depend most on our community colleges for public higher education and social mobility. This is not the best approach to solving a problem created by underfunding. The best approach would be to tap progressive revenue sources to properly fund a community college system that can meet student demand.”

So maybe we should add Governor Brown’s name to the list, along with ALEC, LUMINA, BILL GATES, BARBARA BENO, and the KOCH BROS, as someone trying to privatize public education in California. (Ed.)
OCTOBER LABOR HISTORY

On October 29th 1950, the "Salt of the Earth" strike began in Hanover, New Mexico. 5000 mostly Mexican-American members of the Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers union struck Empire Zinc.

Zinc miners work hard, but this strike was not just about higher wages. It was a fight against racism and intolerance. The pay lines at Empire Zinc were segregated, one for the Anglos, one for the Mexicanos. Housing was segregated; the movie theaters were segregated; the swimming pool was segregated. The Anglos had the skilled jobs while the dirtiest and roughest jobs were given to the Mexican-American workers.

And so the union struck. But the government imposed the Taft-Hartley injunction and the strikers were enjoined from picketing and the strike appeared lost. But the women - the wives and daughters of the strikers - were not on strike and they took on the picketing duty. And despite intimidation and threats and violence they picketed for 14 months until management agreed to give the Mexican-American workers parity with white workers.

One of the great labor films "Salt of the Earth" was made about the strike by members of the Hollywood Ten; film writers and directors who were black-listed during the McCarthy era. The film was banned in America for years because of its alleged communist sympathies, ironically by the same censors who decried the lack of free expression in the Soviet Union.

The film is currently available on DVD, an inspiring, relevant, early feminist film, demonstrating the power of union solidarity.

And speaking of solidarity>>>>

CCSF SOLIDARITY RALLY IN NOVATO

A spirited rally to save CCSF was held in Novato earlier this month.

Approximately 100 CCSF faculty and students picketed the offices of ACCJC in Bel Marin Keys on October 11th, carrying signs, singing, and performing skits expressing displeasure with Barbara Beno and the actions of ACCJC in threatening to shut down City College. Several of our CoM faculty were there and cheered them on. SOLIDARITY in action!

Photos by Peter Minchini
UNION MEMBERSHIP CAN ALSO BE A LIFESAVER
JOIN THE UNION AND PROTECT YOUR WORKPLACE RIGHTS

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.