PONDERINGS OF THE PRESIDENT
By Laurie Ordin

FOR A LONG TIME NOW A VERY GOOD FRIEND of mine and I have been having a debate about free market economics, wages and taxes. He calls himself a bleeding heart libertarian because he feels that a safety net should be provided for people to fall into if they find themselves in unfortunate circumstances, and he also feels that people need to organize into unions, but it seems to me that he also has great faith that the free market will lead us to some miraculous balance of people earning what they are truly worth, guided by principles of supply and demand. He believes that when the government taxes people, the government is “taking” their labor to give it to someone else, and that that is very wrong. He believes that if people were not taxed to pay for such things as museums, symphony orchestras and libraries, people would open their wallets and donate enough to maintain such things. He believes that the people who use these things should pay for them and others shouldn’t be forced to through taxation. He feels that the reason people don’t give enough for these things to be supported now is that everyone just figures that the government will do it through taxes and so that they don’t have to bother. He believes the government’s role is to protect us, so that taxes are justified for police and defense.

If you read this column, you might guess that I don’t agree with my friend. I think that some of his ideas sound good in theory, and that in a vacuum, they might work. But it seems to me that human nature, human failings, greed, and just plain bad luck play such a huge role in individual economic outcomes that theories about the free market end up propping up conservative think tanks and rich people, and the rest of us have to fight for everything. If we are lucky, we were very careful when we chose our parents and chose smart, emotionally healthy, economically stable, loving parents who provided us with every opportunity. As you know, not everyone makes such well thought out choices at the point of conception and so the free market leaves them behind. Did you know that ½ all babies are born have IQs which are below the median? Regarding taxes, well I agree with Jeffrey Sachs who feels that taxes are the price we pay for a civilized society.
Wages are not just set by some magic of the free market. POWER is what sets wages. 

Of course, what do I know? Admittedly, my expertise in economics springs from one undergraduate Econ101 course and a couple of problem sets in Math103, one on supply and demand equilibrium problems and the other one on revenue/cost break even points. So all you economists out there, feel free to write to me and tell me where to go.

Speaking of where to go, my friend (yes, that very same bleeding heart libertarian) and I went last week to see the traveling production of the Broadway hit, Newsies. I would really recommend this show, except that by the time this newsletter hits your boxes, I believe Newsies will have left San Francisco. There is, however, a 1992 Disney film version out there and I’ve heard that it is pretty good.

The play is about a 1899 strike by newsboys against Pulitzer and Hearst newspapers. The business model that these papers had was as follows: Instead of being given papers to sell and being paid a salary, the newsboys would buy a stack of newspapers from the company at a set price per paper. The boys would then sell them for slightly more and keep the difference. They usually made about 30 to 40 cents per day and the companies drew in big profits because they weren’t paying the boys a salary. If the boys couldn’t sell all of their papers, the company would not buy them back and the boys would lose their initial investment. Many of the boys were orphans and street children and couldn’t make enough to feed themselves. Some were as young as 4 years old. In 1898, with the Spanish American War, newspaper sales exploded and several publishers raised the cost a newsboy had to pay for a bundle of 100 newspapers from 50¢ to 60¢, At this time the price increase was offset by increased sales. After the war, many papers reduced the cost back to previous levels, but the New York World published by Joseph Pulitzer, and the New York Morning Journal, published by William Randolph Hearst, did not.

In July 1899, a large number of New York City newsboys refused to distribute these two papers. The strikers demonstrated across the Brooklyn Bridge for several days, effectively bringing traffic to a standstill, along with the news distribution for most New England cities. They kept others from selling the papers by tearing up the distribution in the streets. The boys also requested that the public no longer buy either paper until the strike was settled. Pulitzer tried to hire older men to do the boys’ jobs, but the men understood the boys’ stance and wanted no part in defying the boys. Although the World and the Journal did not lower their 60¢-a-bundle price, they did agree to buy back all unsold papers from the boys.

What I took away from this play is that wages are not just set by some magic of the free market. POWER is what sets wages. Hearst and Pulitzer held all of the power over the newsboys until the boys banded together and shut the papers’ distribution down. Similar scenarios are being repeated today as some of the new disruptors like Uber and other companies in the “sharing” economy claim that the people who work for them aren’t employees but independent contractors and, therefore, aren’t protected under our country’s labor laws.

"Wages are not just set by some magic of the free market. POWER is what sets wages." 

You and I feel the power struggles here at CoM as UPM is working for a fair contract. When confronted with evidence that the District was not being honest with us with regard to our wage package, many of you spoke up and objected. And the District heard from you. That gave UPM power. The fight isn’t yet over, but your bargaining team feels that we are now moving in a better direction. We must remain united. Solidarity won the day for the newsboys and it is the only way to win the day for us.

My friend and I are still arguing about the ideals of a free market economy versus one with capitalist foundations but shored up with social protections against the ravages of the real world. I doubt that either of us will ever change each other’s’ minds. But I’m not waiting for some free market solutions to send us, here at the college, the wages, benefits and working conditions that we deserve. I’m counting on you to stand united so that we can counterbalance those with power here at CoM. We’ll keep you posted as we make more progress, so stay in touch, stay informed and stay involved.
EDITORIAL

BARGAINING – WHAT’S TAKING SO LONG?

OUR COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT with the District expired on June 30, 2013, almost two years ago, and some might be wondering why our UPM bargaining team is taking so long to come to an agreement with the District. Why don’t we just accept the District’s wage offer and move on so we can see some $$$ in our paychecks.

There is a story in the Old Testament that perhaps will explain our bargaining team’s reticence.

In the Book of Genesis, Esau, after working all day in the fields, returns home and is hungry and eager for dinner. And he sees a bowl of stew that his brother Jacob had prepared for himself, and says, “Jacob, if you will let me have your stew I will give you my ‘birthright,’ because I’m hungry and too fatigued to cook my own meal.”

And Jacob agrees, and Esau eats.

But as things turned out, Esau made a bad deal, because by agreeing to trade his birthright to his younger brother, Esau lost the right to his inheritance which, as firstborn, he was entitled under biblical law. This bible story is helpful in explaining why our UPM bargaining team has been reticent in accepting the district’s wage offer.

Reticent, because the fiscal ‘bowl of stew’ that the District has been offering us, is, like Esau’s dinner, a bad deal for our faculty. It would deny us our ‘birthright’ to work in an environment where our work is appropriately and fairly compensated.

Consider where we are on the pay scale compared with other CC Districts. According to a recent Santa Rosa equity study, CoM faculty salaries rank tenth (lowest) of the Bay 10. And the wage increase that the District has been offering would not significantly alter that ranking.

Our UPM bargaining team is not willing to sell-out our faculty for this “mess of pottage.” So if it takes a little longer to settle our contract, it’s because we want to make sure that our faculty doesn’t wake up in the morning, like Esau did, with a bad case of fiscal indigestion. □

UPM STAFF AND COMMITTEES 2014 - 2015

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UPM Newsletter 3 March 2015
UPM COLLECTIVE BARGAINING UPDATE

John Sutherland
UPM Chief Negotiator

A GESTURE IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

Our most recent contract negotiation session has revealed some positive signs. First, the District replaced VP Eldridge with attorney Laura Schulkind. Ms. Schulkind presented herself as direct and forthright and gave us some hope that the District is finally willing to reward its faculty with wage increases. Though at present, the proposed increases lag far behind the staggering raises the District gave its managers, we are cautiously hopeful that we are at least moving in the right direction.

The District proposal prompted immediate questions on UPM’s part, questions that we asked and for which we have received some answers. Still, some concerns remain since we only yesterday received the District response to our inquiries and so we have not yet had ample time for analysis and discussion. Other concerns run deeper. While the District has conducted equity studies for management and implemented their findings for the immediate benefit for managers, the District’s current proposal to faculty begins wage increases only back to 1/1/15 and extends the wage proposal to the end of 2017.

We’re working on verifying numbers and percentages, but the vast difference in implementation timelines dampens enthusiasm. In other words, while the District saw fit to implement hefty management increases immediately, its proposal for faculty occurs over a much longer and later period. Given that we are nearly two years beyond the end date of our 2010-2013 Contract, the District offer, in essence, dodges any wage increase for the first two years of our new contract and extends a year beyond the customary three-year term.

For all intents and purposes, then, the District proposal on wages lengthens the term from three to four and a half years, and when the percentages are broken down, we must see them as lower percentages because of the increased length of the proposed implementation. We will, however, counter on the basis of parity and see how the District reacts.

Another component of the current District proposal is its position on benefits. While we have not yet gone over the District’s offer with its team, we have a written proposal that runs through 2016 for Permanent/Probationary Unit Members. For Temporary Credit and Non-Credit Unit Members, however, the District’s proposal remains capped at the 2012 dollar amount. For Family coverage for eligible part-time faculty, the District proposal stipulates “out of pocket” costs.

While parts of the current District Bargaining position appear more promising, others, as mentioned above, raise concerns. We are planning on addressing these issues at our next scheduled meeting and through the coming weeks and months. As always, we will keep you informed.

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.
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 entitled to UPM’s full membership benefits.
SOME MUSINGS ON WOMEN’S HISTORY MONTH
Bonnie Borenstein

IN THE UNITED STATES, March is Women’s History Month. Last month, February, was African-American History Month. Women share March with the Irish-Americans who also celebrate their heritage that month. Jewish Americans and those of Asian Pacific heritage have been assigned the month of May. Latinos celebrate their heritage from September 15 to October 15, sharing half a month with Italian-Americans, who celebrate their heritage the entire month of October. During November, when some of us celebrate Thanksgiving Day, Native Americans celebrate their heritage month. Arab Americans celebrate their heritage in April; and June is Gay Pride month.

In the field of “cultural studies” there is a topic that explores the cultural practice of “nomination,” or what gets named. Critical studies looks at how power influences ideology and scholars in the field have long noted that the characteristics of those who wield power in any society rarely are “named.” For instance, when an African American man is arrested for a violent crime, his heritage is usually identified. But if, let’s say, a man of German-English-American heritage is arrested for a violent crime, he might be identified as “white” or maybe “Caucasian,” neither modifier really identifying a name for his heritage. Along those same lines, we might see a news story about a drastic increase in violent crime among women, and think, “tsk tsk what is our culture coming to when women are becoming so violent.” But rarely do we see mass media stories about the fact that an overwhelmingly large percentage (something like 90%) of all violent crime is committed by men and that perhaps our cultural notions about the relationship between violence and masculinity might give us pause for reflection.

It almost goes without saying, ironically, that “White,” “Anglo,” “Protestant,” “heterosexual,” and “male” are rarely “named,” lending those characteristics the status of “normal” in our culture. We do not name a special month to celebrate the normal. What all of those who have months designated for the celebration of their heritage or history share in common is their status as “other.” What those groups do not share with women is that they are not at least fifty percent of the world’s population. So, I feel conflicted about celebrating Women’s History Month. On the one hand, that there is a special month to celebrate women’s history only seems to highlight the fact that women are still “other,” despite our numbers.

On the other hand, the designation of Women’s History Month focuses attention on the importance that women have played and continue to play in our world. Until the 1970’s, the role of women in historical and cultural movements was practically invisible. That we recognize the existence of women’s contributions at all has to be acknowledged as a positive thing. There is, however, another still largely invisible aspect to “Women’s Day” that I think might need particular attention.

I am writing this on March 8, International Women’s Day, which was established by the United Nations in 1975. The UN charter of 1945 affirms “the principle of equality between women and men.” According to the UN Human Development Indicators (HDI), however, that principle seems to exist in name only since there is no country on the planet where women are equal to men. The United States, comparatively speaking, is doing okay. We rank a high third in HDI, after Norway and Australia, but there is a precipitous drop in the graph of rankings. Although since 1980 there has been a worldwide movement towards greater equality between women and men, there is still a long way to go. As almost everyone in the US knows, women only make about 77 cents to every dollar a man makes. Moreover many women of my generation, who were active in the women’s movement in late 1960’s and 70’s, are concerned about a complacency among both younger women and men with regard to the hard won gains we made particularly in reproductive rights and cultural notions about women as primarily sex objects. State by state, the federal rights granted in Roe v. Wade are being chipped away as spike heels become higher and higher.

Recognition of the social and cultural importance of women and the injustice of their second-class citizenship was a central concern in the early part of the 20th Century to that “other” named group, The Socialist Party of America. It was the Socialist Party of America that organized the first National Woman’s Day on February 28, 1908 to honor the garment workers’ strike in New York, where women protested against working conditions. This link between the labor movement and women’s liberation has almost disappeared from today’s celebration of Women’s History Month. As an active member of my union, I think it is important to remember that link and keep it alive. Biology is no longer destiny, but our work and how it is valued remain predictive of our future. □
EXECUTIVE COUNCIL ELECTION

AN ELECTION FOR UPM EXECUTIVE COUNCIL for 2015-2017, will be held later this semester. If you wish to run or to nominate someone for one of the full-timer or part-timer openings, please fill out the nomination form in your CoM mail boxes. The deadline for nominations is March 30th. This is an opportunity to help guide the direction of your union.

ENROLLMENT (MIS?) MANAGEMENT

IN THE FALL OF 2010 THE CoM CREDIT HEADCOUNT was 8205 students. A year later in 2011 it had dropped to 7852 students. Then in 2012 it fell again to 7362 students. Then in 2013 there was another decline, to 6620 students. Then a year later in 2014 it went down again to 6305 students. And this semester (2015) our headcount is down another ten percent. Enrollment is now 5660 credit students. [Data from: http://www.marin.edu/com/PRIE/factbook/index.html]

Perhaps our administration is not concerned, because as a Basic Aid district CoM’s budget is not significantly impacted by student headcount. But our faculty certainly should be concerned, because fewer students will surely mean fewer offerings, resulting in fewer faculty.

The District is currently hiring a new Dean of Enrollment Services. If we want to stop the hemorrhaging of students, we need a Dean who is less interested in the collection of student debt and enforcement of punitive repeatability policies, and more interested in helping students pursue their education. We need a dean with a less narrow vision.

Under our shared governance system, our faculty has a role in the selection of Deans. Contact our Academic Senate president if you would like to serve on a screening committee.

THE IDEAL TEACHER

BILL GATES DESCRIPTION OF THE IDEAL TEACHER

My job is to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable.
– Mother Jones

Speak Up
Speak Out
FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORDER (2)

A UNION SHOUT-OUT

ON PAGE 7 OF THE DISTRICT’S MOST RECENT Finance and College Operation Newsletter, there is a listing of “March Holidays of Recognition.”

Included on the list that Vice-President Nelson has chosen to recognize are:

- World Kidney Day (March 12th)
- St. Joseph’s Day (March 19th)
- Make Up Your Own Holiday Day (March 26th).

But of course there are many other March holidays that VP Nelson does not acknowledge.

He doesn’t mention National Pig Day, on March 1st; or National Multiple Personality Day on March 5th; or National Meatball Day on March 9th.

And there is no mention of National Bavarian Crepes Day, on March 22nd; or Bunsen Burner Day, on March 31st. None of these are on his list.

While I really don’t expect the District Newsletter to acknowledge all the March holidays that are currently recognized, I am a bit surprised that their Newsletter doesn’t acknowledge a day that has been celebrated every March throughout the world for over one hundred years - a day that has been sponsored by the United Nations for over 35 years – a day that honors one half of the world’s population, and which the other half depends on for their very existence.

I’m referring to INTERNATIONAL WOMEN’S DAY celebrated throughout the world on March 8th. It’s disappointing that our District Newsletter doesn’t give a shout-out to this important holiday.

But our UPM Newsletter does!

See page eight of this Newsletter to see our union shout-out to INTERNATIONAL WOMEN’S DAY.

PROMISES, PROMISES

HAVE YOU COMPAED TEXTBOOK PRICES since Follett took over from Barnes and Nobel as our bookstore operator? Despite assertions that the change would benefit students, many instructors have noted dramatic price increases in texts. Promises, promises!

MEDICAL WAIVER KERFUFFLE

ACCORDING TO OUR CONTRACT, eligible unit members may waive their District provided medical benefits and receive a rebate of $1500/year. In order to select this option, unit members have needed to fill out a waiver form sent out by HR each fall. This year, however, the District has inadvertently neglected to send out the form, and some of our faculty may have been denied this benefit. If this has happened to you, please contact our UPM Grievance Officer, Bonnie Borenstein, to help sort this out.

FAIRY TALES

"Daddy," a little girl asked her father, "Do all fairy tales begin with, "Once upon a time"?

"No, dear," he replied, "Some fairy tales begin with, "Trust us, you don’t need a union. The management will protect your interests."

"LABOR UNIONS ARE THE LEADING FORCE FOR DEMOCRATIZATION AND PROGRESS."

—Noam Chomsky
E stablished in the early 1900s at the urging of women in the American Socialist Party, ‘International Women’s Day’ celebrates the achievements and contributions of women around the world. Below are some quotes of women trade union organizers who have lead the fight for dignity and respect in the workplace.

Frances Perkins
Secretary of Labor
1933 -1945
“I came to Washington to work for the millions of forgotten, plain, common workingmen.”

Eleanor Roosevelt
Member; American Newspaper Guild
“I am opposed to ‘right to work’ legislation because it does nothing for working people, but gives employers the right to exploit labor.”

Established in the early 1900s at the urging of women in the American Socialist Party, ‘International Women’s Day’ celebrates the achievements and contributions of women around the world. Below are some quotes of women trade union organizers who have lead the fight for dignity and respect in the workplace.

Mother Jones
IWW Organizer

“The first thing is to raise hell if you’re a worker and faced with injustice and you feel powerless.”

Rose Schneiderman
Ladies Garment Workers Union

“I can’t talk fellowship to you who are gathered here. Too much worker blood has been spilled. But I know that the only way working people can save themselves is by a strong working class movement.”
(Speaking at a memorial for the 146 women who died in the Triangle Shirtwaist fire, 1911)

Emma Goldman

“The history of progress is written in the blood of men and women who have dared to espouse an unpopular cause.”

Dolores Huerta
Co-Founder
United Farm Workers

“Don’t be a marshmallow. Walk the street with us into history. Get off the sidewalk. Stop being vegetables. Work for Justice.”

Karen Lewis, President
Chicago Teachers Union

“Let’s be clear...This strike is not about Karen Lewis or CTU’s salary demands...this fight is for the very soul of public education, not only in Chicago, but everywhere.”

Ai-jen Poo
Director, National Domestic Workers Alliance

“Some people call it domestic work. Some people call it women’s work. Some people call it caregiving work. I call it the work that makes all other work possible.”