

NEWS & BLUES

Volume I, No. 4

The Newspaper of Stony Brook's Graduate Students

May 2001

GSEU CONTRACT RATIFIED

Merger & Affiliation Agreement Also Pass

The Contract Raises and Bonuses May Be Slow coming

According to the provisions of the recently ratified contract that governs the terms of employment for all SUNY TAs and GAs, pay increases and lump sum payouts should be coming soon. But actually receiving the money may take some time. Because TAs and GAs are employees of SUNY – and therefore of New York State – their pay comes out of the State Treasury. This means any pay increases depend on action by the State Legislature and the Governor, specifically, passage of the state budget. New York has not passed its budget on time in more than 15 years.

This means that although many TAs and GAs are eligible for the retroactive pay increases negotiated in the contract (though not all are), the breakdown of the state budget process may mean there will be no money available in time to help with summer plans. In fact, the last time there was a retroactive pay due the members much of the allocated money went unclaimed.

This was because TAs and GAs who went off funding ("left the system," in human resources parlance) were eligible for pay increases, but had not left any forwarding addresses where checks could be sent. Any graduate students who are leaving a TA or GA position – or leaving altogether –

continued on page 6

The Merger GSEU to Cease to Exist

One result of the recent GSEU balloting may be that by the end of May, the GSEU as graduate students have known it for nearly twenty years will cease to exist. If challenges to the recent GSEU contract merger, and affiliation agreement votes are unsuccessful, the GSEU will become the largest of three "units" in Local 1104, a Communications Workers of America (CWA) union founded by telephone workers and based here on Long Island in Farmingdale, NY. In

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New GSO Slate Elected

ALL REFERENDA PASS

Walrad to be President

In record numbers, Stony Brook's graduate students came out to vote last week to elect new GSO officers and decide a variety of referenda and changes to the GSO Constitution, which governs its operations. The winners of the GSO officer elections are:

President	Pegine Walrad
Vice President	Tanya Smith
Secretary	Sherrye Glaser
Treasurer	Jasmina Sinanovic

All referenda passed, as did the proposed constitutional changes.

GSO Elections were held in polling places around campus this year, instead of through the usual practice of mail balloting. The results justified the change, because voting levels were up more than 50% from last year. It is not clear whether the voting system alone explains the increase in participation, because there were, for the first time in quite a while, three contested races among the officer positions, as well as three referenda – all asking

graduate students to essentially "raise taxes" on themselves to help pay for NYPIRG, child care, and graduate programs – including the highly popular Resource Access Project (RAP), which helps graduate students fund travel expenses for conference presentations. There were also six amendments to the GSO Constitution, all of which passed by the necessary two-thirds majority.

*Read the full
GSO election
returns, as
certified by the
GSO Elections
Committee, on
PAGE FOUR.*

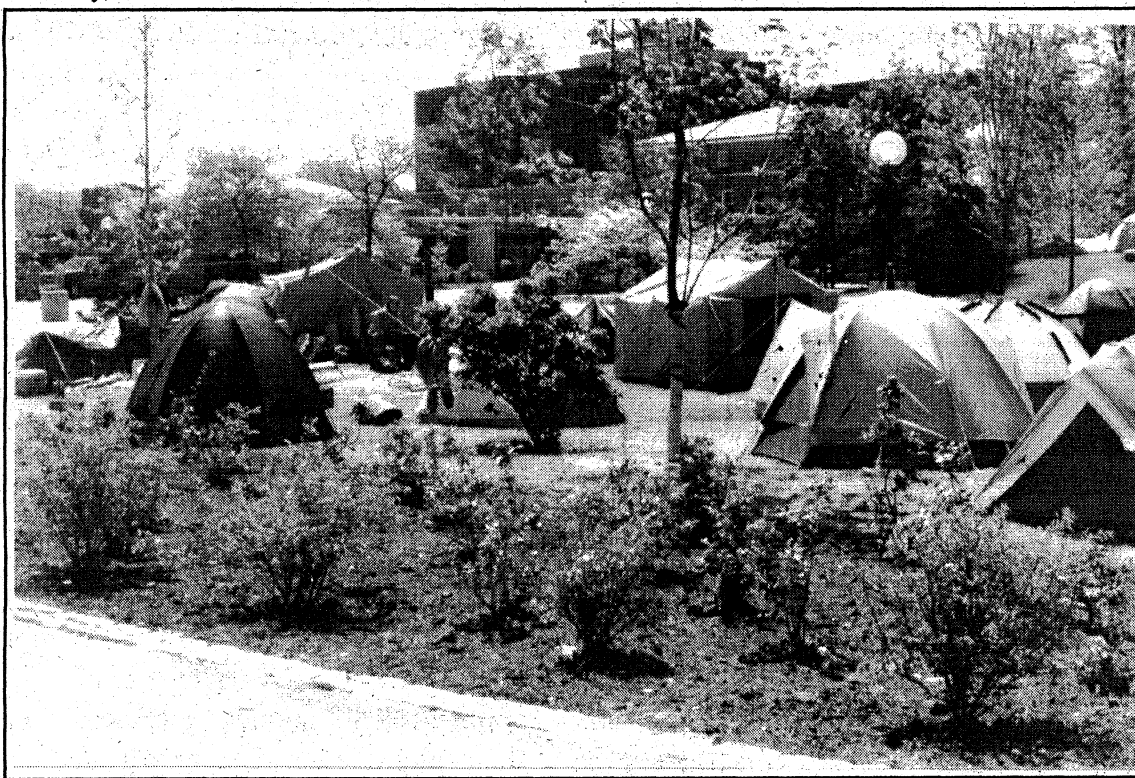


photo: Joel Rosenthal

In 1987 the GSEU organized "Tent City" and won pay increases, subsidies for childcare, and grievance procedures. The GSEU may be on its way to oblivion, if challenges to the merger vote fail.

INSIDE:

- The Second Battle of Quebec (last page)
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GSO or GSEU? - What's the difference?

It's easy to confuse the GSO and the GSEU – the acronyms are similar, and both organizations work to better the lives of graduates students. But there are important differences.

GSO stands for "Graduate Student Organization." The GSO is the graduate student governance body for ALL graduate students at Stony Brook University, irrespective of degree program, or enrollment or employment status. The GSO is responsible for a wide variety of programs on campus, including operations at The Spot, the Resources Access Project (RAP), inviting speakers, funding clubs and campus organizations, etc. There are four officers, elected for one-year terms by Stony Brook grad students. GSO gets its budget from student fees, based on votes like the one conducted last week.

The GSEU is a labor union for all SUNY TAs and GAs across New York; GSEU stands for "Graduate Student Employees Union." All GSEU members at Stony Brook are ALSO members of GSO, by virtue of their student status. The GSEU may cease to exist as an independent entity as the result of a statewide ballot among signed members of the union that took place in March.

News & Blues

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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF - Jacob Heller

CONTRIBUTORS - Abigail McKay, Jean Rousseau, Tanya M. Smith, Glenn Webb

GSO OFFICERS - OUTGOING President: Jean Cadet; Vice-President: GERALYN DATZ; Secretary: Pegine Walrad; Treasurer: David Spears; Speaker: Tanya M. Smith

GSO OFFICERS - INCOMING President: Pegine Walrad; Vice-President: Tanya M. Smith; Secretary: Sherrye Glaser; Treasurer: Jasmina Sinanovic; Speaker: (vacant)

News & Blues is published by the Stony Brook Graduate Student Organization and serves the Graduate Student Community at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. It is currently being published on a monthly basis. We welcome submissions in the form of letters, opinions, poetry, news items, art works, announcements or anything else that could conceivably be of interest to graduate students and the larger University community. Please include your name and a way that you can be contacted with anything you submit. All submissions are subject to editing for length and content. Items may be submitted directly to the Editor by campus mail at the Dept. of Sociology z=4356, or by e-mail at jheller@notes.cc.sunysb.edu.

This newspaper is printed by WebPro.

From the Editor's Desk

This is my last issue as editor of News & Blues. It continues coverage of the evolving problems and successes in the SUNY TA and GA union, the GSEU, as major changes are happening for that venerable institution – including changes that will perhaps lead to its disappearance from the scene as an autonomous agent run by and for graduate student employees. Changes are also happening in GSO, with an almost entirely new slate of officers being elected in last week's voting around campus. Unlike national elections last November, this election appears to have fully expressed the intentions of the voters – despite some disqualified ballots. Higher voting rates means that there is more interest in what's going on here on campus, and that can only be good.

Graduate students need a newspaper because there is too little sense of community here – and although no newspaper alone can create community, it is one important part. This was the thinking behind resurrecting a monthly paper (admittedly, I failed to produce an April 2001 issue), when originally conceived by Kunal Das and the now-outgoing Executive Board of the GSO.

Re-establishing a graduate student newspaper at Stony Brook after a years-long hiatus has had its difficulties, but I like to think

that, together with excellent support for the GSO execs, and contributions from graduate students, undergrads (esp. at the SB Press), and faculty, this reincarnated form of News & Blues has at least made a good beginning. The paper is "off the ground" and could have a promising future. I would like to see this newspaper continue, expand, and flourish. Such a future, however, requires an editor.

The editor's job is to produce a newspaper on a reliable basis that, in some ways at least, serves the interests and needs of the graduate student population, and the University as a whole. The pay is not good (\$300 per issue, plus 50% of all advertising received), but the satisfactions are enormous. Please contact me, or the GSO Office (632-6492) for more information about working on this paper, contributing to the community and – not least – getting to see your own words and ideas, and those of the larger community, represented in print. Though funded by the GSO, there is complete editorial freedom for the Editor in Chief. I will no longer be at Stony Brook University, but I would like to see this paper continue, at least in some form.

---- Jacob Heller, Dept. of Sociology

HELP WANTED

Editor and Editorial Assistants:
Good writers, clear thinkers, excellent researchers for graduate student newspaper. Piecework, good experience, possibility for pay and advancement. Contact *News & Blues* at 632-7721, 632-6492 or e-mail jheller@notes.cc.sunysb.edu.

GRADUATE STUDENT ADVOCATE POSITION

Deadline Extended:

June 1, 2001

DUTIES:

- Assist graduate students in the resolution of difficulties encountered in both academic and personal issues.
- Coordination of monthly graduate student interdisciplinary colloquia.

-- Assist in the coordination of Graduate School Fall Orientation and other special programs and events.

QUALIFICATIONS:

- Doctoral student who advanced to candidacy by Spring 2001 (G5) are preferred.
- Familiarity with campus community in order to facilitate proper resolution of student difficulties.
- Experience in mediating conflicts and innovative ideas for improving graduate student relations with the administration.
- Good organizational skills

TERM:

The appointment period is for the academic year 2001-2002 from August 16th 2001 to June 5th 2002, including intersession with reappointment for Summer 2002.

The Graduate School will assist the student selected for this position in obtaining a tuition scholarship through their academic department or program.

APPLICATION AND DEADLINE:

Please provide a one page letter of application to include qualifications, plus a letter of support from your Graduate Program Director. All application material is due by June 1, 2001.

Send to: Graduate Student Organization 227 Student Activities Center Z+2800

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call the GSO at 2-6492 or Jeanne Reiersen at the Graduate School at 2-GRAD

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\$300 full page
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Classifieds:

\$5 for 25 words or less, \$0.20 for each additional word.

Opinions, Letters, and Ideas...

Women, Freedom, and Social Movements

Tanya M. Smith
Dept. of Anthropology

On March 7th something very important happened on this campus. A few women representing very diverse backgrounds and experiences came together for a panel discussion on "Women, Freedom, and Social Movements." It wasn't just a typical seminar or discussion on academic theories or motivational topics, it was a moving and honest expression the life-work of four women. For a few hours, students ceased being simply 'psychology majors', or 'sociology grad students', or any particular 'defining role' we automatically assume on this campus. We were asked to consider what it means to be human, to want to see justice and social change, to identify with our sex, our race, our country of origin, our inspirations and our desires to work for change as a result of our convictions.

Their passion and enthusiasm was obvious as Jane Bai began the discussion, encouraging everyone to get involved in actions that benefited disadvantaged communities, particularly local Asian communities. Esperanza Martell then upped the ante by sharing stories of her childhood, including the mixed signals of abuse and strength she learned from her mother. As she continued to share her college experiences in her personal and direct style, I was moved by her openness, as well as her conviction and dedication to working for social change and greater organization for women's issues. Laura Whitehorn then spoke on her experiences with activism, including the 14 years she spent in a federal prison as a result of her participation in several strategic bombings, which were in response to US domestic and foreign policies. Her courage and sense of conviction were impressive; she wasn't apologetic, nor did she seem ready to step back from the realm of social activism. She spoke of the high number of political prisoners still being held in the US today and the need for greater awareness and continued resistance. Finally, Kathleen Cleaver concluded the panel by sharing about her work with the California Black Panther Party as well as the history of the civil rights movement. As a very

dynamic and powerful speaker, I could easily envision her uniting men and women, blacks and whites, in the struggle to bring about equality and social change. The unifying theme of these women was 'Action, Action, Action!' In an era of the arm-chair social critic (or apathetic graduate body?), these women were a breath of El Niño in a stale campus environment.

Before the discussion began, Anna Ortega (a graduate student from the School of Social Welfare) addressed the gathering and shared some of her experience in putting the event together. She showed her deep sense of involvement with an emotional reading of Audrey Lorde, an inspirational and empowering writer who has given hope to women of many different backgrounds. Anna's efforts in pulling together these women and the resources to make this event happen were truly commendable. I have since shared with her my gratitude as well as a few thoughts and complaints about what DIDN'T happen that day. One of the most striking things was the dramatic sense of inspiration, empowerment and activism as the event concluded- yet there was no sense of a local follow-up. Despite feeling charged and motivated, I had no idea where to go or what to do on this campus. Although ten groups sponsored the event (including the Graduate Student Organization, the Feminist Majority Leadership Alliance, the Center for Women's Concerns, the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, Straight Alliance, and the School of Social Welfare-GSG), there was a conspicuous lack of support from many if not all of the sponsors. I find it discouraging to see how groups will 'cut checks' for events, yet won't support them by attending.

The overall turnout was pretty disappointing in my view. Although 100-200 people came for the free lunch, maybe only 60 people stayed for the introduction of the speakers and this number continued to decrease throughout the hour and a half discussion. It seemed strange that not only weren't

there many students from the groups that sponsored the event, but also from related departments such as Women's Studies and the School of Social Welfare, particularly considering all the campus hype for Women's Herstory Month. Graduate turnout was also pretty low despite advertisement on the list-serve and the sizable contribution by the Graduate Student Organization for the keynote speaker. What does it take to drag a grad student away from the books for an afternoon?

Does anyone else find it odd that there is no graduate organization devoted to women's issues or general social concerns on campus? Several undergraduate groups exist, some of which co-sponsored this event, but few of these groups appear to be very active and they don't seem to solicit graduate participation. Why is it that almost every social and political group on campus is run by and targeted to attract undergraduate membership? Perhaps as a graduate community, we need to consider a series of discussions to facilitate the organization or networking of people interested in social issues. The first challenge is to identify issues that people consider worth discussing and action they feel is worth supporting. The second step, which I regard as the easier part, is the process of organizing. There are numerous local and national social and political groups that would be interested in Stony Brook graduates' participation. Resources are also available through campus Diversity Grants, the Graduate Student Organization, and through alliances with Polity funded undergraduate groups. A case in point is a new graduate LGBTSA group that is going through these exact motions and plans to hold its first meeting in April. When hard pressed, probably every graduate student could come up with some particular issue that they have a personal stake in or a political position they feel strongly about. The question I put to you is whether anyone is willing to rise to the cry of 'Action, Action, Action?'

CORRECTION

In the March issue of News & Blues an article about the details of submitting the Ph.D. to the graduate school contained some errors. The article should have said that "a 300-page dissertation would need five 9 x 12 clasp envelopes," not 9 x 14 envelopes. Generally, only students in Basic Health Sciences and Engineering would pay for three bound copies. All others pay for two bound copies. It is also possible to order a copy of your work for yourself at additional cost, but not through the Graduate School.

In all cases, remember to check with the Guide to Theses and Dissertations at the Graduate School well in advance of the deadline. The Guide can be found on-line at <http://www.grad.sunysb.edu/GUIDE.T&D/Guide&d.htm> and should also be available for pick-up directly from the Graduate School.

HELP

DESPERATELY WANTED!

WELL-RESEARCHED, WELL-WRITTEN,
INTERESTING ARTICLES NEEDED!

(paid positions possible)

**SUBMIT TO NEWS &
BLUES**

ELECTION RESULTS

The vote counting process began at 4:40 p.m. when volunteers involved in the counting began verifying ballots. The count ended at 9:49pm.
The people counting ballots were: Charis Ng, David Spears, Jason M.DeSantis, Jean Cadet, Geralyn Datz, Ye Yin, and Liz Kelley.

A total of 403 people cast votes; 16 ballots were rejected, leaving 387 qualified ballots.

Referenda (require a majority to pass - ALL APPROVED)

	YES	NO
NYPIRG:	233	139

(Fund NYPIRG at the rate of \$1.50 per full time and \$0.50 per part time student per semester for the next three years?)

Activity Fee Increase:	215	164
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(Increase in student activity fee by \$1.50 per full time and \$1.00 per part time student per semester)

Child Care Fee Increase:	220	155
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(Increase in student activity fee by \$0.50 per full time and \$0.25 per part time student per semester to provide additional funding for Stony Brook Child Care Services?)

Amendments (require a two-thirds majority to pass - ALL APPROVED)

	YES	NO	ABSTENTIONS
A1:	277	61	50
A2:	305	34	47
A3:	310	26	48
A4:	295	27	66
A5:	227	78	70
A6:	278	35	73

Please see GSO Website for details of amendments.

Officers (require a plurality to win)

President	
Bryan Field:	113
Ravindra Ravindra:	109
Pegine Walrad:	125 (elected President)
Abstentions:	30

Because the presidential vote outcome was so close (12 votes), a recount was conducted, and the initial counts were confirmed correct. The rejected ballots would not have affected the outcome of the vote. None of the other contests were considered close enough to warrant a re-count.

Vice President	
Angeliki Pollatou:	113
Tanya Smith:	229 (elected Vice President)
Abstentions:	35

Secretary	
Sherrye Glaser	210 (elected Secretary)
Ashaki Rouff:	111
Abstentions:	56

Treasurer	
Jasmina Sinanovic:	304 (elected Treasurer)
Abstentions:	63

GRADUATE STUDENT ADVOCATE POSITION STILL OPEN

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Stony Brook University
Graduate Student Housing Committee
RESOLUTION OF ON-CAMPUS HOUSING PROBLEM
POSITION PAPER
May, 2001

Historical overview

The information in this section was detailed by the Chair of HPAC, Mr. Dan Melucci, in an email to Serena Kim early April 2001. She kindly made this information available to the GSO Housing Committee. We have used it to provide an overview of HPAC's involvement in the university on-campus housing crisis.

The HPAC, a university planning and advisory committee, turned some of its attention to graduate housing this year at the request of the GSO and the Graduate School. GSO worked with the Dean of the Graduate School to propose policy and procedural changes to deal with the unmet graduate student housing demand. HPAC discussed the issues and endorsed the proposal as submitted.

The priorities recommended were reasonable and consistent with those principles HPAC established for undergraduate housing priorities. The primary principle being that older resident students were placed at the bottom of the priority list. The members of HPAC, the graduate school and GSO endorsed this concept unanimously. The President approved the recommendation as submitted.

Universities do not, in HPAC's collective opinion, have the same obligation to meet the housing needs of graduate students as they do for undergraduates. Graduate students are mature people with housing needs and expectations that are different from undergraduates. It means the graduate student population cannot be served as would be desired. A one-year adjustment period for continuing students would result in HPAC being unable to live up to that guarantee.

Graduate students will not lose any beds because of HPAC's decision regarding HSC undergraduates in the Chapin Apartment Complex. Most offers to new graduate students were made by April 23rd and they all included a guarantee of housing if the May 15th deadline is met.

The Problem

As the policy stands, it is clearly unfair and goes against the primary mission of the university to: "provide comprehensive undergraduate, graduate, and professional education of the highest quality." The 2001 - 2002 Housing policy that has been implemented in April 2001 has an inflexible one-year lease with a severe penalty for any student who has to break the lease if they do not fit in one of two categories - graduating or withdrawing from school. The penalty is payment in full of all months remaining in the twelve-month lease contract, by the tenant.

The new housing policy indicates that eight semesters is the maximum life for any on-campus residence. This stipulation, as detailed in the 2001 - 2002 policy announcement letter of March 2001, has disregarded the multiple levels and range of graduate education at Stony Brook University.

The housing policy for 2001 - 2002 does not suggest a phase-out process for graduate students as it has for HSC undergraduates, given the multiple-levels of graduate student programs, ranging from 1 - 6 years. Students most vulnerable are incoming students. However, current students are just as vulnerable given the real difficulty of acquiring off-campus rental in Suffolk County.

A proposed rental increase for Schomburg Apartments, at 25.25%, was a phenomenal increase. Although this increase was ultimately cut to about 13 percent, the cost is still significantly high and cannot be borne by many of the current residents on campus. The result is that many on-campus residents, who would prefer to stay on-campus and would be able to under the new priority listing, are now forced them to compete with incoming students for very scarce off-campus housing. Several international students have reported that, even when off-campus housing may be available, rental agencies/property owners participate in clearly discriminatory practices.

Recommended Considerations for 2001 - 2002 Housing Policy

Alternative options for a phased or transitional policy for the implementation of the 2001 - 2002 housing policy should consider the following:

- (1) Amendment of the 2001 - 2002 rental policy to accommodate the complexities of graduate student in a more equitable fashion. The strategy utilized for undergraduate students in the HSC is indicative of HPAC and the university's appreciation for the position of undergraduate students. Graduate students request similar consideration given to the complexities of graduate academic lives that range from one year master's level programs to seven year doctoral programs.
- (2) Length of lease to include three types: academic leases from September through May that students may or may not be able to terminate; semester leases for four to five months that students would not be able to terminate; and/or annual (twelve month) leases that allow students some flexibility in breaking their contract.
- (3) Set-up a functional appeal panel/committee, to include graduate student representation, for graduate students who have to leave on-campus residence.
- (4) 2001 - 2002 rent increases for Schomburg four bedroom apartments would not increase beyond \$1800.00 per month. Preliminary proposal of 25.5% increase is phased in over two years such that it is no more than 13.6% (to a maximum of \$450.00 per month per single room) in the first year and 11% (to a maximum of \$500.00 per month per single room) in the second year. Subsequent years' increases, beginning with 2003 - 2004, would follow the traditional 2-5 percent increases.
- (5) Proposed 2001 - 2002 rent increases for Schomburg one-bedroom apartments would not increase beyond \$970.00, with a maximum of 11% increase in 2002 - 2003 school year, followed by the traditional 3-5 percent increases in subsequent years.

Future Efforts

The GSO has been cognizant of the need for long term solutions to the housing problems faced on- and off-campus. The activation of the GSO Housing Committee this semester is an important step forward in student involvement in this process. Some provision has also been made in the University at Stony Brook's five-year plan. Their specific action to "assess housing conditions for graduate students, including a review of whether administrative procedures in University Apartments are responsive to their needs. Develop a plan for improvements ... in 2001" is a hopeful starting point for the graduate students (GSO) and the university (HPAC) to work on meaningful solutions.

Submitted by: Graduate Student Housing Committee
Abigail McKay, Chairperson
amckay@ssw.hsc.sunysb.edu
(631) 216-2114

GSEU Merger...

continued from page 6, column 2

addition to Verizon telephone workers, CWA Local 1104 also represents telecommunications workers at Avia (a "spin-off" from Lucent technologies), nurses at NYU's downtown hospital (formerly Beekman Hospital), and library workers at the North Babylon Public Library. Local 1104 is also merging with Telephone Traffic Union Upstate, CWA Local 1112, the union for upstate New York telephone operators.

This will mean the end of the largest independent graduate student union in the United States, and a 20-year history of activism and advocacy for the rights of graduate students in their role as employees. No more will TAs and GAs at SUNY schools belong to their own, self-run, self-determined union.

Under the new regime, each SUNY campus will be administered by a "Business Agent," who will deal with contract enforcement, grievances, and keeping communication lines open between the membership and the five-member Executive Committee. The current GSEU Area Vice Presidents are being "grandparented" into the Business Agent positions. Thus Stony Brook's Business Agent will be Ramon del Castillo. The Executive Committee, which runs Local 1104, will initially be made up of Local 1104's current President, Bill Lilja, Executive Vice President, George Bloom, and Secretary-Treasurer,

Edward Connelly, together with the two new Executive Vice Presidents, one from each of new locals merging with 1104. These new Executive Vice Presidents will be current GSEU President Monazir Khan (Sociology, Binghamton) and the current Local 1112 President, Donna Conroy.

In a telephone interview with News & Blues, George Bloom, the Executive Vice President of Local 1104 (and from the Verizon "unit" himself) described his vision of why the merger would be good for GSEU members. "I just think that all we really have to offer the graduate students is a structure that is in place, because the students are transitional. By the time they establish a program they are ready to move on to new things. Hopefully we'd be able to lobby politicians for better salaries, in addition to that, we'd be using our political clout to organize other factions at the college," he said. One of the groups that is already on the list for potential unionization is graduate research assistants, or RAs.

The membership breakdown is actually favorable to GSEU members, because altogether (not that GSEUers are necessarily "together") the roughly 4000 current GSEU bargaining unit members from across New York State will outnumber the 2600 current members of Local 1104, and the 750 current Local 1112 members combined. Until regular elections are held in November of 2002, however, President Lilja and the current officers will remain in office.

When elections do happen, there will be little distinction between the previously separate unions. The three Executive Vice President positions will remain, but each member will receive a ballot and be able to vote for all five Officer positions, regardless of the unit to which they belong, Bloom said. The officers will receive a monthly salary, based on 40% of what an annual salary would be in the bargaining unit; for Stony Brook's Business Agent, then, that would be slightly more than \$6000 per year, along with comparable benefits, like health insurance.

No one knows quite how the new relationship will work, assuming that the balloting that led to the merger withstands current challenges. If, however, GSEUers do have a change of heart, there is an "escape clause" in the merger agreement: a petition containing signatures from 30% of the GSEU unit within Local 1104 is sufficient to sever the relationship. At that point all resources would be separated according to the proportions that were brought into the merger, and the GSEU would revert to its original, independent status as Local 1188.

As far as proximity goes, Stony Brook is luckier than other SUNY campuses to the extent that Local 1104's offices are right here on Long Island (1 Florgate Road, Farmingdale, NY 11735). Their website is at <http://www.CWA1104.com/> and it contains contact information for the current officers.

Not Enough Advertising in News & Blues?

Contact the editor to place your ad in the April issue.
632-7721/jheller@notes.cc.sunysb.edu reasonable rates - impoverished - but highly educated readership

GSEU CONTRACT...

continued from page 6, column 1

should make sure to supply contact information to their graduate secretaries, or whoever handles paychecks in their department or work area.

It is the responsibility of the union to see that the contract is administered; SUNY is not obligated to track down former employees who may be living elsewhere - overseas doing research, for example. Even people who have had direct deposit for their paychecks need to furnish this information, because once an employee leaves the system, there is no longer a direct deposit arrangement in place. Campus GSEU leaders are actively recruiting mobilizers in each department and work area to take on the responsibility of contacting anyone for whom this may be a problem. Contact the GSEU at gseu@ic.sunysb.edu for more information

STONY BROOK MEMBERSHIP CONCERNED ABOUT PROPRIETY OF GSEU VOTING Challenge to Contract Vote Possible

At a lightly attended general membership meeting of the GSEU at Stony Brook on April 25, there was widespread discontent with the conduct and outcome of the voting for the GSEU contract, and merger and affiliation agreements.

There are reports that some GSEU members have filed or are in the process of filing a formal challenge to the voting that ratified the contract, merged the GSEU with CWA (Communications Workers of America) Local 1104, and fundamentally altered the relationship between GSEU and its international, CWA. Because of the challenge's pending status, explicit details were not available for publication.

At the heart of any challenge to an election or balloting are irregularities in the voting. Such a challenge to these votes would proceed under the rules of the GSEU - not Local 1104 - because the final merger has not, as of yet been given the blessings of the main CWA administration, which must approve and certify all such mergers. Voting was suspiciously light at the two largest chapters of GSEU - Buffalo and Stony Brook, according to sources. At Stony Brook, the vote ran roughly two-to-one against the merger, though the contract passed at all campuses.

The failure to have adequate voting opens the vote to challenge because it is an essential precept of labor practices that the membership's wishes must, at all times, be considered. If ballots were unavailable, or different voting periods were used at different chapters (campuses), then some union members may have been unfairly deprived of their voice in union affairs. News and Blues has learned that initial challenges to the GSEU votes sent to GSEU headquarters in Albany were "not accepted" - that is, the United States Post Office was unable to deliver certified mail to that address, despite repeated attempts. If challengers to the election do not receive satisfaction within the rules of the GSEU Bylaws and the CWA Constitution, they may appeal to State agencies. Any such challenge would need to be filed with the Public Employees Relations Board (PERB), because TAs and GAs are public employees of the State.

Concerns at the April 25 meeting were strong enough that the subject of "withholding dues" actually came up. This would be an extreme form of protest by members who feel that they have been denied representation.

GSO Standing Committees

(AS OF 4/21/2001)

Board of Appeals (Grievance Committee)

Chair: Undetermined
Members: Sherrye Glaser (MCB)
Scott Grace (Political Science)

Anthony Olejniczak (Anthropology)
Mustafa Siddiq (Pathology)
Marvin Vasquez (Senator)
Margie (Physiology)

Budget Committee

Chair: David Spears (GSO Treasurer)
Members: Keith Metzger (Anatomical Sciences)
Stephen Patnode (History)
Kostas Pentikousis (Computer Science)
Pegine Walrad (GSO Secretary)

Elections Committee

Chair: Pegine Walrad (GSO Secretary)
Members: Sherrye Glaser (MCB)
Elizabeth Kelley (Pol. Science/Media)
Marie Laude (Senator)
Charis Ng (GSO Office)
Meagan Reeve (NYPRIG)

Housing Committee

Chair: Abigail McKay (Senator)
Members: Jean Cadet (GSO President)
America Canas (Marine Sciences)
Geraldyn Datz (GSO Vice President)
Masa Prodanovic (AMS)
Asaki Rouff (Geosciences)
Jasmina (Theater Arts)
David Spears (GSO Treasurer)

Lounge Advisory Committee

Chair: Undetermined
Members: Jean Cadet (GSO President)
Geraldyn Datz (GSO Vice President)
Charis Ng (GSO Office)
Masa Prodanovic (AMS)
David Spears (GSO Treasurer)

Pegine Walrad (GSO Secretary)
Jasmina (Theater Arts)

Rules & Constitution Committee

Chair: Tanya Smith (GSO Speaker)
Members: David Spears (GSO Treasurer)
Anthony Olejniczak (Anthropology)
Chris (Political Science)

TO JOIN A COMMITTEE, CONTACT GSO at 632-6492

The Queer Alliance Sit-OUT for Awareness

By Glenn Webb & Tanya Smith
Queer Alliance



With themes like 'The Year of Community Service' and 'Campus Diversity Day' being celebrated at the May 2nd Fountain Festival, it seemed natural that the first action of the newly formed graduate Queer Alliance would be to sit-OUT as a real and visible part of the campus community. Formed earlier this semester, the Queer Alliance is a social and political group for queer students, particularly, but not exclusively, graduate students and faculty. While the undergraduate Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgendered Straight Alliance (LGBTSA) has long existed here at Stony Brook, a critical mass of graduate students felt the need to create a group through which we can socialize and voice our politics. From its inception, the founders' intent was that our group's voice would not be marginalized in some dank, tiny, hidden office that many would see us stuffed into. In contrast, our sit-OUT at the Fountain Festival was an example of our ideal of getting out there: combining socializing with the real need to increase campus awareness of our group as well as important political issues that affect our community.

Coordinated in cooperation with the LGBTSA and the Gay and Lesbian Bisexual People in Medicine (GLBPM), over sixty of us took over a plot of land between the Old Chemistry building and the SAC. From 12:00-2:00, we formed a 'Queer Safe Space', which many of our members feel is missing on campus and beyond. But further than this, graduate and undergraduate students, faculty, staff and friends formed the largest visible on campus queer presence that most students currently enrolled here have ever seen. In conjunction with Stephen Sebor from the Empire State Pride Agenda, we also collected hundreds of signatures in support of legislation that provides protection against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. The Sexual Orientation Non Discrimination Act is currently being considered in the state Senate and the Dignity for All Students Act is being considered in the state Assembly, and the petitions signed at the sit-OUT will

be brought to Lobby Day in Albany on May 21st. Hundreds of brief surveys were also completed, providing information about general campus attitudes on issues such as discrimination and civil unions.

At the sit-OUT, we convened around a huge banner with our battle cry,

"Lets Get One Thing Straight, We Are Not!" emblazoned across it. This message is in keeping with our choice to be known collectively as 'queer', a word that many in the national and global gay and lesbian communities are divided on as an expression of identity. For the Queer Alliance, 'queer' represents a united power in our politics that goes beyond the gay and lesbian movement's long desire to have these 'same-sex sexual orientations' normalized. 'Queer' represents a territory where the homophobia that we as individuals have all experienced has heightened our awareness of just how different we truly are. By virtue of this, the queer political desire is to have our differences not normalized, but acknowledged, accepted and celebrated for our inherent diversity.

With the sit-OUT at the Fountain Festival being a highly successful venture, we now look forward to our summer plans. The Queer Alliance, along with our LGBTSA and GLBPM comrades, plan to march under the banner of 'Stony Brook Pride' at the Long Island Pride Parade in Huntington on June 10th. During the fall semester we plan to celebrate National Coming Out Day with a Drag King and Queen Show at The Spot. This event will be a show that this campus has never seen before; so acknowledge, accept, and celebrate with us as we're OUT there, and Stony Brook is about to get a whole lot more diverse, and a whole lot more Queer.

For more info about meetings and events, e-mail the Queer Alliance at: sbgrad_pride@yahoo.com

The Second Battle of Québec

Jean Rousseau
Dept. of Chemistry, Alumnus



Photo: Lucie Huart

Peaceful protesters gathered near the perimeter, enclosed by a three meter high fence. The first use of tear gas by police backfired when prevailing winds pushed the gas back towards the Congress where officials were gathering. To prevent officials from being inconvenienced, snow cannons were used to force the gas toward a residential neighborhood.

Seattle 1999 and Québec 2001 are two cities now remembered for anti-globalization clashes. All of a sudden, confrontations between protesters and the police force, clad in bulletproof and facemask gears, burst on the evening news. In Seattle, the picture of a policeman kicking a demonstrator in the groin stirred revulsion. In Québec city, clouds of smoke and tear gas engulfed whole neighborhoods, while throngs of policemen indiscriminately shot rubber bullets at passers-by.

The third edition of the Summit of the Americas held in the city of Québec, from April 20 to 22, 2001, is officially over. The three meter high fence, posed on highway divider concrete blocks, forming a 4 km long safety perimeter within the old city, has been dismantled. Residents living within the perimeter no longer have to show their IDs to move around. Residual powder from the caustic tear gas stayed on the ground for more than a week, until some welcome spring showers washed it away. Jaggi Singh, a protester remains in jail without bail. He was charged with possession of a dangerous weapon – a catapult that was used to hurl teddy bears at riot squad police – and with violating bail conditions imposed in connection with a charged related to an earlier demonstration. (This last charge was dropped by the city of Westmount, Montréal, where the action took place.) His main crime has to do with his vocal activism against corporations. The Summit allowed the gathering of 34 heads of state (Cuba was excluded) and the first international participation of the newly elected American president. Meeting organizers used the event to push forward the negotiation process for the free trade area of the Americas (FTAA). The goal is to establish a zone extending from Alaska to Terra del Fuego in 2005, where investments, services and goods could be traded without barriers. Trade representatives of the different

panies than elected officials. NAFTA agreement's chapter 11 allows companies to sue government if they believe that their "right to invest" has not been respected. Corporations have portrayed many environmental laws as little more than impediments trade. In 1996, the American company Metalclad accused the Mexican government of violating Chapter 11, when the government of the State of San Luis Potosi refused to authorize a site for garbage burial. The local population was concerned with the affect on drinking water. According to the arbitration committee, named after a complaint was launched, the refusal to provide a permit constituted an act of expropriation. So far, the Mexican government has paid \$20 million US for his gesture.

A document leaked from the current FTAA negotiation on investments has dire consequences (see www.iatp.org) and is even worse than chapter 11. The FTAA would amount to a charter of the multinational. The leaked document mentions that governments would have to respect a long list of conditions to forbid results or performance. It would be impossible, for example, to mandate the foreign investor to recruit its manpower locally. The wish is expressed that foreign corporations do not ask participating countries to lower their environmental standards before investing. Nevertheless, government should pay compensation to corporations for profit loss if the country raises its environmental standards. Moreover, binding arbitration could be mandated by corporations as they see fit. Québec 2001 became a rallying battle cry for those opposed to globalization. Representatives of the civil society convened a summit of the people the week before in Québec (see www.sommetdespeuples.org/en/sommet/index.html). Numerous representatives of unions, farming community and aboriginal groups from South, Central and

participating countries have been hard at work (see www.ftaa-alca.org). For them, "economical integration will reinforce democracy, create prosperity and fulfill human potential." As prosperity increases more people should benefit, the rhetoric goes. For two decades, neo-liberals politics have been put in place in Latin America to fight underdevelopment. In the year 2000, some 220 million people live under poverty wages in this region. And the number has increased since 1980 (see *Le Monde Diplomatique*, April 2001). The skepticism is also encouraged by existing clauses of the current free trade agreement between Canada, US and Mexico or North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) that gives more power to compa-



Photo: Lucie Huart

More than 6000 policemen were present during the Québec summit. They used 4709 cartridges of gas canisters, and shot 822 rubber bullets. Tear gas launchers became offensive weapons when used at point-blank range, contrary to procedures. Police arrested 420 people on charges that they were wearing gas masks or filming. North America gathered (for some of the views expressed see

www.web.ca/~comfront/alts4americas/eng/eng.html). They worded a strong denunciation of free trade, which ruffles some feathers among business leaders concerned by the FTAA.

A peaceful march of between 28,000 (police estimate) and 60,000 (organizer estimate), took place on Saturday the 21st of April. Participants refused to be branded as "luddites" because of their opposition to globalization. Their protest was a vibrant sign that the street was their only forum. Parliaments cannot even see the FTAA texts being discussed, while the American Business Forum has been given by the Head of States, an official consultative status during the negotiation. It may not be surprising that polls show that Canadians consider democracy to becoming more and more privatized.

For a meeting lasting three days, the leaders gathered less than 2 hours to formally work on the agenda. The final press release was even ready before the meeting started, thanks to another leak. Closed door meeting were held among leaders. To address some of the concerns about the promotion of democracy, it was decided to put some emphasis on the topics. An interpreter mike left unintentionally opened showed the rift existing between some of the poor and rich countries. President Chavez of Venezuela expressed its unease with ties between trade and democracy when most of the land in his country is owned by less than 2% of the population. (M. Chavez was the only one to refuse to cosign the reworked press release on the democracy issue.)

Mr. Rousseau was GSEU Statewide Treasurer from 1992-1994, and received his Ph.D. in Chemistry in 1995. He lives in Québec city and witnessed first hand the events surrounding the Québec summit. e-mail jeanrous@microtec.net