

# The GSO News

"We are not slaves"

## And Blues

Volume 1, Number 5  
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### Trustees Vote Down Unionization Resolution

By Eric F. Coppolino  
Student Leader News service

ALBANY- The State University Board of Trustees on January 24 voted overwhelmingly to deny the SUNY system's 4,000 teaching assistants (TAs) and graduate assistants (GAs) the right to vote in a unionization election.

TAs and GAs, who are also known as "graduate student employees," have been battling SUNY for more than a decade for the right to hold a unionization election, arguing that they are underpaid, lack such basic benefits as health insurance, and have no real rights as employees. Some earn as little as \$3,300 for a full academic year of teaching and have no employee benefits.

"The SUNY trustees have declared war on graduate students today," said Dominic Chan, acting president of the Graduate Student Employees Union (GSEU, which is not legally recognized). "They've demonstrated their blatant disregard for democracy and human rights of graduate students."

The trustees vote was almost unanimous, with the only dissenter being student trustee Judith Krebs.

Graduate student leaders stress that they are not seeking SUNY's blessings to form a union, but rather, are seeking the "Basic democratic right to hold an election," according to Chris Vestuto, a statewide graduate student organizer. Were a union election held in which graduate student employees voted to form a labor union, they would have the same collective bargaining rights as professors, civil service employees, and other state employees.

SUNY administrators claim that graduate student employees are really "apprentices" or "professors in training," and as such, are not really entitled to the same rights as faculty and staff of the university. Terming them "incidental employees" whose employment is incidental to the fact that they are also graduate students, SUNY once compared them to the prisoners who manufacture license plates and were denied

the right to form labor unions on the same basis.

But student organizers say the workers they represent receive State of New York paychecks and perform the exact same jobs as professors and instructors, teaching every subject from ballet to physics. They argue that SUNY is using their student status merely as an excuse to save the added costs of real salaries, health insurance and other benefits, which could amount to millions of dollars every year.

The issue came to a showdown before the Board of Trustees in November when Krebs, the student trustee, introduced a resolution upholding graduate students' right to hold a unionization election.

But when several trustees resisted the vote, graduate students attempted a civil disobedience protest, reading support materials into the official record which they said SUNY refused to distribute to the board for consideration.

Graduate students continued to protest

even as the board voted to move to a secret location and continue its meeting with the door locked.

One student, SUNY Binghamton GSO President David Baranov, was arrested attempting to attend the meeting. Baranov accepted an adjournment in contemplation of dismissal (ACOD) in December, which effectively drops the charges against him so long as he does not get arrested within the next six months.

Vestuto said that the board continued its practice of holding secret meetings last week when it discussed the issue for an hour in executive session. But the GSEU maintains this is par for the course in SUNY's record of upholding democratic principles such as open elections and open public meetings.

"Management opposes unions on a variety of levels," Vestuto said. "Just what lengths they're willing to go to is an indicator of how democratic or undemocratic they really are. SUNY seems to be willing to go pretty damn far."

### No Pay Deferral Because "You're Not Employees"

By George Bidermann

Citing their position that graduate students who work for the university are not "employees," SUNY decided in late December that GAs and TAs would be exempted from the pay deferral program that will affect thousands of SUNY faculty and staff. But problems with exempting the approximately 5,500 paychecks from the deferral have caused SUNY Central to ask all campuses to temporarily increase GA/TA checks by 10% over the next five pay periods to compensate for the cut.

Students will see a 10% increase in their gross pay over each of the next five paychecks, starting January 30 and ending March 27, but no increase in net pay, as the 10% cut will be automatic. Faculty and staff who are subject to the deferral cut will receive the back pay when they permanently leave the university's employment. After the 10% increase and subsequent cut, paychecks should come out close to the same amount students were receiving, according to Tom Mannix, Associate Vice Chancellor for Employee Relations and Personnel.

Mannix said the 10% increase in gross pay may put students into higher tax withholding brackets, thereby increasing the amount of federal and state tax withheld, but students may be able to get these funds back when they file their 1991 tax returns. "If the increase moves a graduate student from one income level to another," he said, "it will affect the level of deduction. The increased gross income doesn't necessarily mean that the net take-home pay will be affected, but there's no guarantee that every graduate student will be held harmless" from a reduction in take-home pay.

Alex King, vice provost for Graduate Studies, said he expected that the additional withholding taxes would amount to a few dollars per paycheck. Both King and

Mannix said there is no way that SUNY could, beforehand, calculate the potential effect of the increased pay on individual withholding because of variables such as marital status and exemptions. King said that a letter explaining the situation was to be handed out with each GA/TA paycheck on January 30.

The issue of a pay deferral first surfaced in December, when SUNY proposed deferring 20% from employees' paychecks over five pay periods to help cope with the budget crisis enveloping it and the state. Members of the GSO were initially told that the deferral would include graduate and teaching assistants, but research assistants would not be affected, as they are paid through the state's Research Foundation. Mannix said that, since SUNY does not recognize graduate students as employees, it was decided that they should not be included in the pay deferral.

But the Office of Audit and Control, which oversees payroll for university faculty and staff, contended that it would not be able to exempt graduate students from the cuts. Mannix then contacted campuses that have graduate student lines, and asked that a 10% "increase" be added onto paychecks to compensate for the 10% cut.

GSO President Jane Ely said that while the GSO is happy that their will be no decrease in the net pay GAs and TAs will receive, "The whole idea was ludicrous to begin with. To propose cutting the pay of employees who make so little to begin with is indicative of SUNY's lack of concern for its graduate student employees."

According to Mannix, paperwork must be submitted and processed for each of the approximately 5,500 GAs and TAs who receives the "increase," and the process must be repeated again in March when the gross pay returns to its normal level. Ely said this

illustrates the ends to which SUNY will go to avoid even the appearance of suggesting that its graduate students are employees. "To spend the time and money involved in this is a sad comment on SUNY's priorities. I think most graduate student employees would have preferred to have their pay deferred and be guaranteed the rights and benefits that SUNY's other employees have."

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# We Are Still Waiting for an Adequate Response

The form letters that more than 600 graduate students signed and sent to President John Marburger in December did not only address the pay lag. Prominent among the issues raised in the letter was the demand that the tuition waiver for stipended graduate students be guaranteed and that graduate students be exempted from the new mandatory fees. Furthermore, the letter stated that forcing graduate student employees to pay the new tuition increase would amount to a pay cut that violated the "Guidelines on Students Rights and Responsibilities." They demanded a response to these questions by January 8, 1991.

Well, the students who signed these letters are still waiting for President Marburger's response. The GSO did receive a letter from Alexander King, the vice provost for graduate studies, on January 9. His response was not at all the kind we were hoping to get. In fact, the following are two revealing quotes:

"It is worth mentioning that there is no right of TA/GA/RA recipients to receive a tuition scholarship as you suggest."

And how about this gem? "On the matter of mandatory fees, I cannot provide any assurance that graduate students will be afforded any waivers, as you request."

The decoupling of tuition wavers allows SUNY Central to avoid adding funds to the tuition pool, which the Graduate School needs to pay full tuition waivers to graduate student employees. As the stipend and the tuition wavier is decoupled it is, in SUNY's eyes, not a pay cut.

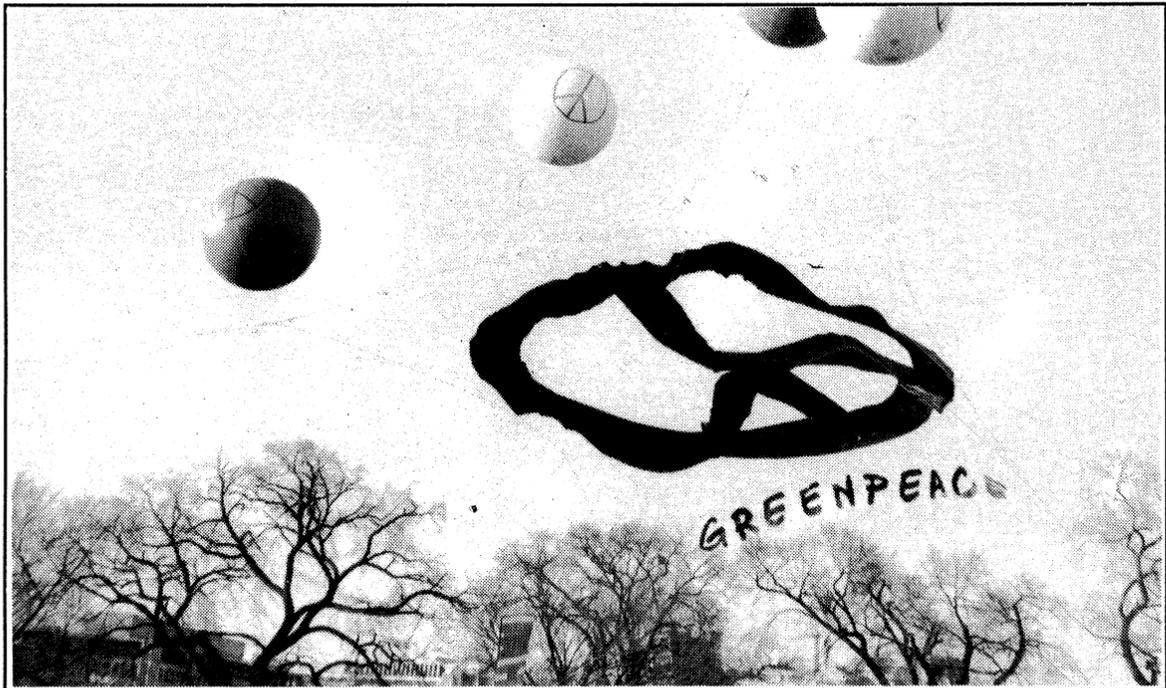
With the total amount of mandatory fees looking like it will surpass \$300 next year (\$100 health fee, \$200 + parking fees, \$50 bus user fee-- most Chapin residents must use the bus), the meager paychecks of graduate student employees will be stretched even thinner. And, on top of this, the cost of living raise that we receive may be less than five percent for the 1991-92 academic year. This is because the administration, since the graduate student work stoppages of 1987, has given graduate student employees the same cost-

of-living increase it gives to faculty members, but the United University Professions, the union that represents faculty members, may very well forgo this five percent raise as part of their contract negotiations this year. It could even be a tradeoff for an agreement not to institute parking fees for union members. What it all comes down to for graduate student employees is less money in and more money out.

The time to start demanding that this is not an acceptable situation is now! We cannot wait until

the fall when we return to new fees, tuition hikes and the like. We will even have larger classes this year as the budget crunch means bigger sections but no increase in TAs. If lines are to be cut, they will be cut from fifth-year students and this will stop many short of their goal of attaining their doctoral degrees.

You must get involved! Come to the GSO Senate meeting on February 6, the Action Committee meetings, or just stop down at the GSO office. We cannot protect your rights alone!



## This Is for All of You....

By Chris DelVecchio

This is for all of you who didn't think it was important enough to dig a little bit through the dirt of the mainstream media to uncover the reality behind the curtain of lies during the U.S. invasion of Panama. This is for those of you who didn't feel that the lives of Panamanians were worth that of North Americans, or that they weren't as important as the U.S. interests in the area or the "removal" of Manuel Noriega. This is for those of you who saw only the Panamanian rallies for our boys in the wealthier districts of the country and felt that you were getting the total picture or that getting the total picture wasn't in your interest.

This is for those of you who felt that a show of force to threaten Saddam Hussein was all we'd need and that supporting our threat (now a reality) would be a wise move. This is for those of you who felt that a war with Iraq would be no more than a quick Hollywoodesque air assault where, again, the lives of our "enemy" were worth less than that of our own. This is for those who felt that killings thousands upon thousands more people than were ever killed in the invasion of Kuwait (which, by the way, the U.S. government had knowledge of and gave consent to via our ambassador days before the invasion...) was both sensible and ethical.

This is for those who now feel that the mainstream media isn't living up to its duty to report the truth when papers like Newsday report only 25,000 demonstrators marched on Washington December 19, when even the D.C. police estimated the estimated the crowd at 50,000 plus, and the organizers estimated it at around 100,000. This is for those out there who feel there is something very wrong when the media must have all the news first filtered through the Pentagon before it airs, and that when high school students go on strike en masse in New York City and Long Island to protest what was, on January 14, the

threat of war, we should hear about it-- and that goes for the 59,820 demonstrating in Seattle (police estimate) at the same time.

This is for those who feel they're entitled to know what happened to Long Islander Kathy Boylan and the 83 others from the United States, U.S.S.R., Ireland, Italy, Indonesia, Lebanon, Jordan, etc., who camped out one mile off the Iraq/Saudi border to bring attention to the insanity and inhumanity of war, and consequently stimulate a peaceful solution to the Gulf conflict.

This is for those who believe that in war, truth is the first casualty and are beginning to recognize the need to do one's own research, partly by being an active part of the anti-war/anti-imperialism movement. This is for those who are only now seeing through this cloud of misinformation and are, as a result, opposing the senseless theft of life-- all life-- not just of North Americans. This is for those who feel that for the sake of oil companies and militaristically strategic landholdings, the U.S. government will soon send in the ground troops who will engage in the worst war humanity has ever witnessed, to the blind eye of the mainstream media. And finally, this is for those who are now seeing it is for the love of people, for the desire to live a life of peace, that we are out in the streets all day and all night struggling to stop this madness and to "bring the troops home now." This is for those who love the troops but hate the war and want our friends, family, and lovers back with us again.

To the ever-increasing numbers of us out there feeling alone, angered, frightened, or uncertain, let's work together to create a world where we can enjoy life the way it was meant to be lived (after all, if war is natural, why is it that we're trained to kill?), where we can all enjoy an Earth where we can interact as people once again. Let's work together to stop this war now!

(The writer is a member of the Red Balloon Collective.)

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*Most of us against the war...*



Demonstrators in the student contingent jam the streets of Washington last Saturday.

George Bidermann

## *There Is a Missile Headed Our Way...*

By Fred Mayer

Sisters and brothers, there's a missile headed our way. This is no ordinary missile. This missile has been launched, has reached its crest, and has begun its descent. We are its target. No TV screen will block its path. No amount of subconscious denial will alter its trajectory. No 24-hour diet of lies and obfuscation fed to us by big brother will prepare us for its effects. There's no escaping this missile, because it is at once nowhere and everywhere. This is the missile called reality. It's racing towards us. It can't be stopped. No "Patriot"-mechanical or human- will save us from its impact.

What reality? The reality of annihilation and mass death. The reality of cluster weapons and carpet bombing. The reality of multiple Hiroshimas of "ordinance" falling on the heads of third world peoples. The reality of catastrophic environmental disasters treated as afterthoughts by military commanders who even asked Bush-- before our attack-- for permission to explode a nuclear device above Baghdad. The reality of promises kept; the launching of missiles into Israel and the growing number of guerrilla attacks against multinational powers. The reality of hundreds of thousands of refugees tracking across the sand-- women, children, the elderly, the sick-- in search of peace.

No amount of trying will stop the truth from engaging our minds. Right now we are being urged to "support our troops" so they can better kill and be killed. We are being asked to give our blood so that it too can mix with the rivers of blood already flowing in the sands of the Middle East. At the same time, the semantic structure of the English language is being turned inside out right in front of our eyes. "Collateral damage," "pinpoint bombing," and "neutralization," among countless other terms, have been applied to this task.

But the most powerful semiotic forces are the metaphors which have carried us into this disaster. Chief of these is Clausewitz's: "War is politics pursued by other means." This nearly two hundred year-old dictum was today glorified in the New York Times by Michael Howard, who teaches military and naval history at Yale University ("Clausewitz: Man of the Year?," op-ed page, January 28). Howard bows deeply before "Clausewitz's trinity," composed of the government, the armed forces, and the people. In the classical Clausewitzian tradition he openly calls for more

"...if American public opinion is so horrified by the sight of slaughter that it ceases to be supportive of the whole enterprise, Saddam Hussein might still not lose the war."

For those white males who call the "shots," this is a game. This is intellectual stimulation, a realized masturbatory fantasy, the ultimate proof of sexual superiority. The most effective analysis I have seen regarding Clausewitz's metaphor was put forth recently (before the U.S. attack) by George Lakoff, a very influential professor of linguistics at the University of California at Berkeley. In a detailed, 7,000 word article which was distributed electronically around the globe near the end of December, he provided unrelenting proof that-- using the first three words of his article-- "metaphors can kill." Let me draw upon a single paragraph from his article:

"It has long been noted that we understand war as a competitive game like chess, or as a sport, like football or boxing. It is a metaphor in which there is a clear winner and loser, and a clear end to the game. The metaphor highlights strategic thinking, team work, preparedness, the spectators in the world arena, the glory of winning and the shame of defeat. This metaphor is taken very seriously. There is a long tradition in the West of training military officers in team sports and chess. The military is trained to win.

This can lead to a metaphor conflict, as it did in Vietnam, since Clausewitz's metaphor seeks to maximize geopolitical gains, which may or may not be consistent with absolute military victory. The situation at present is that the public has accepted the rescue scenario of the just war fairy tale as providing moral justification. The president, for internal political reasons, has accepted the competitive game metaphor as taking precedence over Clausewitz's metaphor: If he must choose, he will go for the military win over maximizing geopolitical gains. The testimony of the experts before Congress falls largely within Clausewitz's metaphor. Much of it is testimony about what will maximize gains and minimize losses. For all that been questioned in the Congressional hearings, these metaphors have not. It is important to see what they hide."-- ("Metaphor and war: The metaphor system used to justify war in the Gulf" is available in its complete form. See

the Stony Brook Coalition for Peace.)

Thus we are faced with the prospect that uncounted lives, regional stability, the process of nonviolent conflict resolution, and the hopes that blossomed in November of 1989 will all be sacrificed on the altar of victory through technology.

It's not too late to recognize that the struggle for our very survival depends on us. Not the administrators and their generation, not our faculties, whose deafening silence is overwhelming, not the Democratic party, which gave us this war on a silver platter. We whose futures are being destroyed must be the ones to transform this society. Thousands of activists from high schools, colleges, and universities have been crisscrossing the country, forming links, sharing resources and building the infrastructure for a movement which will take this country back from the 1.5 party system that is killing us. Millions of young people are recognizing the personal stake they have in this world. I urge everyone in the SUNY system to join the struggle. There's a missile coming...

(The writer is a member of the Stony Brook Coalition for Peace, and a doctoral candidate in psychology.)

### *GSO Senate Meeting*

**Wednesday, February 6  
7:30 PM  
Room 201, Central Hall**

***Please make sure  
your department is represented!\****

\*Departments that do not have active senators will not receive departmental allocations this year, will not pass go, and will not collect doctoral degrees. Don't believe us? Try us...

# A History of the GSEU Battle:

By Paul Rodell

Reprinted from *The Graduate Post*

Buffalo-- In the mid-1970s, the University of Buffalo's GAs/TAs began organizing under the name of the Graduate Student Employees Union. The basic idea behind the union movement was that GAs/TAs perform valuable work for the university for which they are paid. GSEU adherents believe that their "stipends" are, in fact, wages, and that as employees of New York State they have the right to unionize. Furthermore, the GSEU holds that only a union can address the many issues that affect GAs/TAs.

So what, then, is the GSEU's history? What are the issues that concern GSEU? And, what difference has the union made?

## GSEU Origins & Initial Failures

The GSEU started at UB, and from 1974 to 1977 it had a vital and vocal membership that sought legal recognition so the union could represent GAs/TAs and negotiate a binding contract with the administration. Union activists noted that other schools, such as the University of Wisconsin, the University of Michigan, and Rutgers, all had GA/TA unions that had won valuable gains for their members.

Then, as now, GSEU members wanted a contract to regularize working conditions such as class size and workload, to increase salary and benefit levels, and to gain recognition for the work that graduate student employees do. UB President Robert Ketter met with union representatives and heard their concerns; however, on the central issue of legal recognition he repeatedly claimed (incorrectly) that only New York State's Public Employees Relations Board (PERB) could make such a determination.

Hundreds of GAs and TAs then signed GSEU membership cards as the first step on the road to gaining legal recognition from PERB. A formal petition for recognition and hundreds of union cards were submitted to PERB, and hearings were started. This first GSEU case did not last long, since PERB ruled that a GA/TA union had to be statewide in membership. Disheartened by the prospect of organizing on such a wide scale, the GSEU organizers abandoned their efforts.

The union issue then sprang up at SUNY Stony Brook, where GAs/TAs organized themselves in 1980-81. The Stony Brook experience turned out to be very similar to the UB attempt, and union activists there also lost heart when they found that the union effort had to be statewide.

## GSEU Rebirth & SUNY Response

The GSEU was rekindled at Buffalo in 1982, when hundreds of GAs/TAs became incensed at the administration's decision to funnel hundreds of thousands of dollars to a few select TAs in a few favored departments. A large "steering committee" was immediately formed, a system of "stewards" was set up, research was conducted to learn from the first attempt's failure, links were made with other campuses, and literature was prepared.

The renewed GSEU began a statewide membership drive in 1982-83, and in six months more than 30% of SUNY's GAs/TAs signed membership cards. A new petition for recognition was submitted to PERB, with substantial numbers of GAs/TAs from schools around the state, including Buffalo State, Oneonta, Fredonia, and even the Syracuse University Forestry School, as well as the four university centers.

SUNY responded to this grassroots movement with two basic strategies: increased salaries to defuse discontent, and legal harassment. Prior to 1982, the "floor" for GA/TA salaries stood intransigently at \$3,500 per year. When the GSEU mounted its mem-

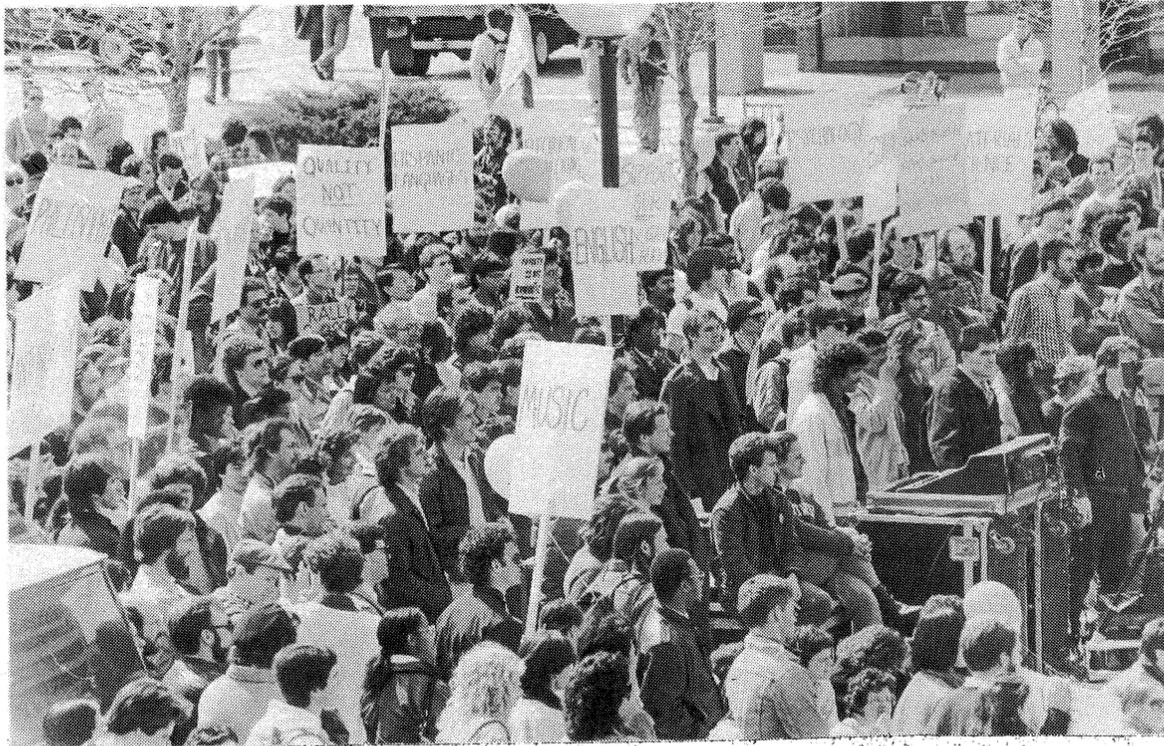


Photo by Susan Dooley

In April 1987, GSEU and the GSO led graduate student employees through a series of work actions and negotiations with Stony Brook's administration that led to wage increases and a bunch of broken promises.

bership drive in 1982-83, the salary level began a quick series of jumps. For example, in May 1983, incoming GAs and TAs were sent stipend offers of \$4,100, which were raised to \$4,400 over the summer, and raised yet again to \$4,700 just before the new school/work year.

Since 1983, the administration has hoped to buy off GAs/TAs in an attempt to avoid dealing with other important demands such as Blue Cross/Blue Shield health-care plans that unionized graduate student employees enjoy at other campuses. They also hoped to avoid negotiating with united GAs/TAs who would demand consistent job descriptions, contractual reappointments, and effective grievance procedures.

## CWA Affiliation

On the legal front, SUNY's lawyers claimed that the GSEU was just a "student club" because it accepted GSA support. SUNY's lawyers claimed that a student club could not present a case for recognition as a "real union," and hoped to cut the union from its GSA base of support even if its petition was not thrown out of PERB.

In response, the GSEU cut its formal ties with GSA (although retaining an excellent working relationship with GSA and other progressive student governments around the state). Then, after a thorough search, the GSEU statewide leadership decided to affiliate with the Communications Workers of America (CWA), which offered legal assistance, monetary support, and additional organizing skills.

The CWA is an attractive, progressive union that had expanded beyond its base in the communications field and entered the public sector. In fact, CWA's Organizing Director of its New York/New Jersey region was of founder of the Rutgers GA/TA union. An affiliation agreement was signed, and in the Spring 1983 semester the GSEU membership voted overwhelmingly to become CWA Local 1188.

From its origins in the mid-1970s, the GSEU rose up and spread. Setbacks were experienced, but the desire for a strong GA/TA union never died. Throughout the GSEU's history, SUNY has continued its efforts to strangle the baby in its crib. Ironically, these efforts not only failed, but made the GSEU even stronger. SUNY's legal challenges merely facilitated the GSEU's affiliation with CWA, and attempts to buy off GAs/TAs with salary increases served only to show gradu-

ate student employees that real gains are made through agitation rather than subservience.

## GSEU Fights Off Political Sharks

By 1984, the GSEU had active chapters at the four university centers, and contacts at other SUNY colleges. In addition, more than 30% of SUNY's GAs/TAs were members, and the union's statewide leadership was dedicated to further organizing campaigns to enhance its petition in PERB. To its supporters, the long struggle to get the union established seemed to be won, but there were powers ready to fight the GSEU at every step.

Two of GSEU's enemies were SUNY Central in Albany and the Governor's Office of Employee Relations (OER), which wanted to keep cheap GA/TA workers. Some 96% of all state employees (more than 400,000 workers including all SUNY faculty, professional staff, clerical and maintenance workers, and public safety officers) are unionized, and neither the OER nor SUNY Central wanted to see another active group of unionized workers.

To offset SUNY/OER resistance, GSEU leaders hoped for support from "pro-labor" Governor Mario Cuomo and they seemed to have good reasons for their optimism. The governor is a well-known friend of labor, and always got organized labor's political endorsement as well as the vote of the rank and file. In addition, in a 1983 WEBR radio talk show, the governor endorsed the rights of graduate student employees to organize in SUNY. And finally, CWA was one of the governor's earliest and strongest supporters; Cuomo even appointed former CWA official Thomas Hartnett to head the OER.

However, Cuomo's pro-labor stance and CWA ties were not enough to gain his support for the GSEU petition. The governor was just as interested as SUNY/OER administrators in maintaining cheap, non-union graduate student workers for SUNY, and in squashing a grassroots movement he did not control.

## More Legal Harassment

Immediately after the affiliation vote, the state's lawyers demanded that PERB dismiss the GSEU petition. Their contention (which has no precedent in labor history) was that the GSEU was not the same union after its affiliation with CWA and, consequently, the people who originally signed membership cards had

# Lies, Deceit, Delays, and Deadlock

been hoodwinked. This argument ignored the fact that the union's membership voted overwhelmingly for affiliation and that affiliation is an internal union matter over which PERB has no say.

The GSEU responded with legal arguments, and by initiating a new membership drive with new membership cards showing clearly that the union was GSEU/CWA local 1188. In the fall of 1984, the four SUNY university centers were each assigned a full-time GSEU graduate student organizer financed by CWA. The organizers and the local chapters worked with each department, and strengthened local committees for a successful membership drive.

Once again, adversity was turned into an opportunity to build a stronger union. By the end of the fall semester a new petition for recognition was filed and the membership lists were substantially larger, with many new first-year graduate students.

Meanwhile, the main thrust of the SUNY/OER case against the GSEU was that GAs/TAs do not perform "work" since they are merely receiving valuable teaching experience. Therefore, GAs/TAs cannot be considered "employees" of the State of New York, since these "students" are just gaining a valuable educational experience.

As well, SUNY defense lawyers claimed that there was little continuity within the "job" categories. They presented "evidence" purporting to show that some graduate student employees are GAs for a year and then become TAs or go off the state payroll. Their contention was that GAs/TAs are, at best, only "casual" employees, and therefore ineligible for unionization. Their supporting "statistics" were selectively chosen and their arguments were too weak to be a real threat.

## State Political Battles

As part of the political whirlwind surrounding the GSEU's effort, a prominent state Republican entered the controversy, to embarrass the Democratic "friend of labor" governor as well as to defuse one of the

union's demands. In early 1985, State Treasurer Ned Regan ordered an "audit of the GA/TA system." The result was a sharp criticism of SUNY for running such a slipshod program and an order to immediately formulate: 1) written terms of appointment and a list of duties for each job; 2) written terms for reappointment; and 3) written job performance evaluations each semester by faculty supervisors.

As in the case of salary levels, agitation by the unrecognized GSEU forced the state to attend to graduate assistant issues. Unfortunately, the state tried to use these improvements to thwart the GSEU's drive, believing that some concessions would be well worth the price if the union could be stopped.

## GSEU and UUP: A Strained Relationship

Since 1984, the executive officers of the United University Professions (UUP) have spared no effort in an autocratic attempt to take over or "accrete" (to use the technical legal word) the GSEU. Their power grab runs directly counter to the wishes of GSEU members, and even violates the will of the UUP's own delegate assembly.

From the mid-1970s until late 1983, GSEU members always thought that their main enemies would be SUNY and OER administrators. It never entered their wildest dreams that the fledgling union's greatest foe would be the faculty and professional staff union.

The UUP's leadership was not interested in GAs/TAs until they saw the chance to gobble up an already established union. Even when the UUP itself was formed in 1972, their petition for recognition specifically excluded GAs and TAs!

## "Basis" for the Takeover Attempt

The opening round of the anti-democratic UUP takeover bid seemed innocent enough. In 1983, then GSA President John Crawford was in Albany as the graduate student representative on the Student Association of the State University (SASU) Board of Directors. As

part of that month's SASU board meeting, an evening reception was held for "friends of SASU."

At the reception, Crawford met UUP President Nuala Drescher, and they discussed the GSEU within the general context of the state's union movement. Ms. Drescher extended her best wishes for the GSEU's efforts and offered UUP's help. Crawford thanked her and promised to relay her message to GSEU activists, but held out no hope for any joint efforts.

In early 1984, the GSEU affiliated with CWA after considering a number of unions, including the UUP, which was eliminated from consideration for two reasons. First, faculty supervisors are also UUP members and this fact would make contract negotiations and grievance hearings difficult. Second, the UUP had done very little for their own part-time employees, and there was no reason to expect them to do anything for graduate students, especially since they abjured GAs and TAs at the time of their union's own creation.

With the GSEU's decision in favor of CWA, it seems that Drescher and her executive board either felt threatened by CWA or were simply miffed at being passed over. Drescher then claimed that her casual cocktail conversation with GSA's Crawford was a policy meeting, and that Crawford was the president of the GSEU. This fabrication then became the basis for her claim that GSEU should be affiliated with the UUP!

## UUP Delegate Assembly Fights

Shortly after Drescher began making her absurd claims, the GSEU heard that she was planning to have her delegate assembly endorse a GSEU takeover. GSEU activists worked with the UUP's "reform caucus" and disgruntled part-time employee members to oppose Drescher at the October 1984 UUP delegate assembly. At the meeting, a UUP "reform caucus" member yielded to GSEU President Zoe Zacharek, who spoke against Drescher's proposal while union members distributed GSEU literature. After Zacharek spoke, a resolution supporting GSEU's independence was introduced and passed.

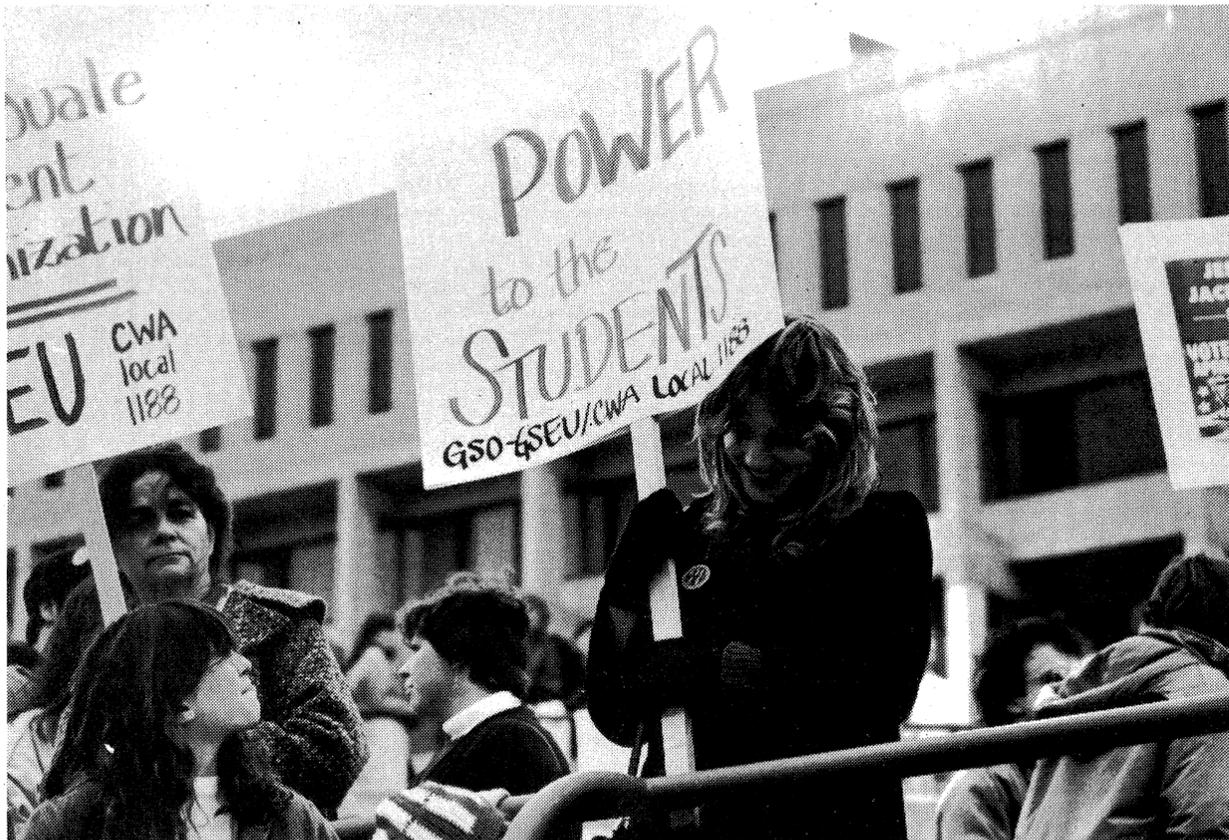
Unfortunately, the resolution contained a fatal flaw. Although Drescher could not file a motion in PERB for "accretion intervention" against GSEU, she could, and did, file a motion for just "intervention," thereby honoring the legal letter, but not the spirit, of the delegate assembly's resolution.

Drescher's motion was filed on January 31, 1985, only two days before another UUP delegate assembly in Albany. Much to her surprise and anger, the GSEU heard about the move, and Zacharek and other GSEU activists once again went to Albany (at literally a moment's notice). Again, a sympathetic UUP member yielded the floor to Zacharek, but this time Drescher was ready, and fought back as only she knew how. She cut off the power to Zacharek's microphone!

Instead of being thwarted, Zacharek spoke louder and continued her speech without the microphone. Drescher demanded that Zacharek stop speaking; Zacharek bravely continued. Drescher then began yelling at Zacharek and turmoil resulted. When things quieted down, Drescher told the delegates that their objections were "moot" since the legal motion was already filed. As well, the case was being handled by lawyers from UUP's parent organization, the New York State United Teachers (NYSUT), over whom the UUP delegates had no control.

## UUP Legal Intervention

After January 1985, UUP lawyers sat in on all the GSEU's PERB hearings. The UUP strategy was to file a separate "accretion" motion as soon as PERB ruled



GSEU supporters turned out in force at the Jesse Jackson rally in May 1988.

University News Services

(Continued on Page 7)

# Budget Crunch? Or Money for Lunch?

The GSO recently received a memo from Hugh Mulligan, director of Parking and Transportation Services, explaining that the SUNY Board of Trustees "has recently adopted new amendments to the Traffic and Parking Rules and Regulations for SUNY at Stony Brook as recommended by the Campus Committee on parking and approved by the Stony Brook Council."

Among other things, the amendments modify vehicle registration procedures, revise parking area designations, modify the appeal procedure, and remove gender references. The most important revisions, of course deal substantial increases in the fine

structure for parking violations. The revisions are:

	Old	New
Grade I violation	\$10.00	\$50.00
Grade II violation	\$ 7.50	\$25.00
Grade III violation	\$ 7.50	\$15.00
Late fee	\$ 2.50	\$ 5.00

Grade I- Parking in fire zone or handicapped space.  
 Grade II- Parking on grass, sidewalk, in loading zone or blocking dumpsters and campus operations.  
 Grade III- No campus permit, unauthorized parking, not parked between lines, parking on roadways; en-

gine idling in enclosed area.

The new fees go into effect on February. As the GSO has an employee who regularly is denied access to disabled parking spots by insensitive louts, we believe the increase for Grade I violations is fair (we would also recommend boiling these offenders in oil). But raising the fees for other "violations," given Stony Brook's lack of attention to solving the chronic shortage of parking spaces on the main campus, gives the appearance of just one more revenue-raiser that will hit students, who can least afford it, the hardest.

--Bidermann

## FLASH! FLASH!

Okay, kids, it's time for a new feature at the GSO News and Blues. This monthly feature will highlight the best exchange of letters between graduate students and members of the administration that we find on campus. This month's selection involves a letter sent to Residence Life from residents of Chapin H Building who were flooded out in the October rainstorms. Dallas Bauman's reply, written a month later, says it all. Submissions are welcome (E-mail will be accepted as long as it is verifiable). What will we name this feature? Why--

# "...And They Call it Dialogue!" of course...

### Here's the letter:

12/4/90

Dear Sir:

We are residents of Chapin H1115 and H1117. Our apartments were flooded on October 13 during the heavy downpour that night. The attitude with which the concerning authorities dealt with this event greatly disappointed us. We think that some of the bureaucrats should be held responsible for our property damage and our physical and mental suffering.

What happened that night in H1115 is briefly described below; the situation in H1117 was similar.

9:30 PM: Rainwater began to enter our living room. We immediately called our coordinator, the Chapin Office and Public Safety, telling them that the situation was very urgent and asking for help (we did not call the Chapin director because his home phone number is top secret and which we do not know). Not long after, our coordinator and the coordinator on duty arrived, but they had no authority to have someone pump the fast accumulating water. The only thing they could do was to make more phone calls (some of the calls went to the director because the coordinators are the only ones who have access to the secret number).

We waited anxiously for the rescuers to come. An hour passed, nobody came.

At 10:30, the water level outside was so high that water simply leaked through the wall of one of the bathrooms and our bedrooms were in danger.

Still nobody came.

Suddenly, the fire alarm began to roar for some unknown reason. We thought with some relief that the policemen would come soon (since according to our experience they always respond in a timely fashion to fire alarms). But every rule has exceptions; they didn't come.

By this time, our bedrooms were flooded, completely, all three of them. Two of us tried, in vain, to stop the water by blocking the door with jeans and sweaters. The "dam" provided no blockade to the water at all, it did however, prevent the leaves floating on the water from getting into the room.

At around 12:30 AM, someone came at last. At about 1:30 they began to pump the water. At that time the water in our apartment had been at least three inches deep, and we had been wading in the cold water for more than three hours trying self rescue. Since some of us were not at home, many of our possessions like text books, clothes and shoes were soaked and damaged.

An hour later, the water receded. If they had begun to pump the water by 10:30, our bedrooms would not have been flooded at all.

By 2:00 AM, we finally got into beds in utter fatigue, ready for sleep. But this is not the end of the story. Just at this time, a strange order came from the Chapin director, who lived less than 100 yards away but never showed up in the entire process! The order said: "Everybody must move out, the building is to be closed, because it's dangerous." What nonsense! How is it that the building was more dangerous when the flood was gone than when it was being flooded? Why didn't this guy have his men do something for us when we needed his help most? How could he know what was going on without coming to the site? Why did he give stupid orders without knowing what was going on? To show his authority?

Moving with your bedding on a wet night at 3:00 AM, after fighting the flood for almost four hours, was not going to be a wonderful experience. That was what this director ordered us to do for no reason at all. Did we pay our rent to play with a flood? Did we pay the rent to obey stupid orders? Definitely not!

Two of us, dragged out of our beds without knowing what was going on, did move to the so-called safer place. We have to agree that sleeping in the flooded bedrooms is not a positive experience at all, but at least we were sleeping in our own beds. Those two guys who moved had to sleep crowded on a sofa in a living room.

Did we pay nearly \$200 [per month] to sleep in the living room on a sofa? No way!

We were told after the flood that the director promised to clean the flooded apartments and have a gutter dug to let water drain in case it rained again. The cleaning was done, but it lasted for an entire week, which means that we were living in the filthy rooms for a whole week! As for the gutter, it was totally forgotten. It did rain again three days after, again our apartments were in danger. One of us got "impatient" and dug a gutter himself to drain the water, and our apartments were saved due to his effort.

According to the old residents of H1115 and H1117, these apartments had been flooded before, so the Chapin authority should have known this for years, and the problem could have been solved with almost little effort. They did nothing.

We now ask that our damage be reimbursed; that we be allowed to terminate our current housing

contract whenever we feel like. The Chapin director should be responsible for any consequences this may have.

We'll hold our rent till we get a satisfactory response from the university authority. No late fee, of course.

Yours,

/s/ Geng Xix, Zibang Li, Xiaohong Zheng, Chuan Xie, Jeng-chi Mau, Jin Yin Wang, Shaoping Wang, Bibek Ghosh

P.S. Chapin is really badly damaged. We often run out of hot water when we want to take bath and shave in the morning. Last winter there was no heat in bedroom B & C of H1115 and A & B of H1117; we had to use electric heaters which made the air extremely dry and we felt uncomfortable the whole winter season.

### And Here's the Response:

January 3, 1991

This same letter addressed individually to:

Geng Xin, Xiaohong Zheng, Jenq-Chi Mau, Shaoping Wang, Zibang Li, Chuan Xie, Jin Yih Wang, & Bibek Ghosh

Dear Mr. Xin et al...

Thank you for your letter concerning the flooding which occurred in your apartment on October 13, 1990. I regret you were inconvenienced by this situation and the circumstances which followed. The extensive damage in our area which resulted from these extreme conditions affected many individuals, both on and off campus.

Our efforts to respond promptly to many problems with flooding in these extreme conditions met with limited success, not only due to the magnitude of problems on campus, but also because of circumstances faced by employees who had to cope with the consequences of heavy rainfall in their own homes at the same time that they were being asked to come to the campus to address problems here. The delay in responding to your situation was not unusual in these circumstances. The amount of time required to complete cleaning of your apartment was complicated by these factors as well as the slow process of drying soaked carpet.

Please be assured that Mr. Ernest, the Assistant Director for Apartment Living, was conscientiously involved in responding to the circumstances which you and other residents faced during this emergency. I spoke with Ivan myself during this time, and can assure you that he worked long hours over the course of the weekend to try to make the best of a difficult situation. The frustration you feel as a result of the incident, though understandable, is misdirected when you hold Ivan accountable for circumstances which were beyond his control.

You correctly point out that the problem of potential flooding in Chapin has been known for some time. The campus has requests capital rehabilitation funds to rectify this problem for several years, and only recently has this project been funded. You are likely aware that work on tying together the existing storm system, with connection to larger capacity drainage, has recently begun. When this work is completed, future occurrences such as the flooding earlier this year should be precluded.

With respect to damage to personal property which might have resulted from these circumstances, you should direct your complaint to Dr. Rosemarie Nolan, Administrator of Claims, Records & Risk Management, 210 Administration. This emergency was, however, beyond the control of the University, and you will therefore be held responsible for all rent payments and late charges resulting from your failure to make payment in a timely manner.

Again, I regret that you and other campus residents were inconvenienced by the circumstances resulting from October's heavy rains. I extend my best wishes for a more enjoyable continuation of your residency in Chapin as additional improvements, such as the drainage system work, are complete.

Sincerely yours,

/s/ Dallas W. Bauman III  
 Assistant Vice President

Remember, send us your best exchange (recent, please) to: GSO News and Blues, "...And They Call it Dialogue!", Room 201, Central Hall. Decision of the judges is final.

# History of the GSEU vs. the SUNY Meanies—

(Continued from Page 5)

in favor of GAs/TAs having the right to unionize. Such a motion would automatically make the GSEU a part of UUP; there would be no vote here, just a simple "administrative procedure." This, in fact, was UUP's only feasible alternative, because they had (and still have) neither the desire nor the ability to wage an election campaign and were, justifiably, afraid that GAs/TAs would soundly reject them.

Perhaps at your department's next wine and cheese party you can ask your faculty members why they tolerated their union's attack on the GSEU. You could also ask them if this is an indication of how GAs/TAs will be treated if the UUP takes over the GSEU.

## PERB Decision-- GSEU Down But...

On September 3, 1987 Harvey Milowe, a PERB administrative judge, dealt the GSEU a stunning and completely unexpected blow. In a 17-page decision, Milowe rejected the argument that assistants are employees, and the GSEU's petition to represent SUNY GAs/TAs. Milowe also wrote the first PERB decision in 1977, rejecting the GSEU for not being a statewide union.

An angered GSEU President Rick Eckstein (now Dr. Eckstein) of SUNY Stony Brook immediately announced that the union's lawyers were filing an appeal. Eckstein said that he believed Milowe's position was not supported by others in PERB, and that the union had perhaps a 50-50 chance of winning on appeal. Even if that appeal should be denied, he received assurances from CWA that final recourse would be made in civil court. Eckstein said he was confident that the GSEU's case would be won in a court of law.

Eckstein was confident because Milowe's decision was based on a simplistic and basically erroneous syllogism. Milowe reasoned that assistantships are only given to graduate students, that students are not employees and, therefore, that assistants cannot be employees. It should be noted that Webster's dictionary characterized a syllogism as "a subtle, specious, or crafty argument."

Milowe came to his "specious" con-

clusion after admitting that GA/TA duties are contractual and that assistants are employed because they are paid for services rendered. Yet, rather than acknowledging that an assistantship makes a graduate student more than just a student, Milowe created a fallacious test, asking whether a GA/TA was at SUNY to be a student or an assistant. Because GAs/TAs came to SUNY to study, he reasoned, they could not also be employees.

Both Eckstein and former GSEU Vice President Tim McGreevy of SUNY Buffalo viewed this decision as just another in a long series of attempts by New York State to delay GA/TA unionization. The State's strategy, they contend, is to stonewall the union as long as possible to weaken the GSEU's grassroots momentum. They find it ironic that the state's supposedly pro-labor governor has done nothing to help the GA/TA union. Eckstein believes that it would only take one phone call from the governor and the whole problem would be solved.

## GSEU's Legal History in PERB

Instead of receiving a prompt judgment from PERB, the GSEU has been subjected to delay after delay. It took PERB until October 1985 to determine that the GSEU had signed up more than the required minimum of 30 percent of all GAs/TAs. Nothing happened for months, and formal hearings on the petition were not started until the following January.

With SUNY's requests for delays and PERB's cumbersome bureaucratic style, it took until October 1986 for eleven days of testimony to be heard, during which time the UUP "intervened" in the case. Their "intervention" was nothing more than a simple attempt to lay claim to the GSEU and gobble it up.

Although SUNY, the OER and the UUP are opposed to the GSEU's efforts to unionize, although PERB plays into SUNY's union-busting strategy, and although Governor Cuomo cannot be bothered to help, GSEU activists are not ready to concede defeat. They know that they have sound legal arguments, and that GAs/TAs need their own union to represent their own interests as employ-

ees of New York State.

Until this past summer, the appeal was stalled because two of PERB's three directors were split on the decision. The vote of a third director was needed to break the deadlock, but there was a major problem. PERB had not had a third director for more than a year.

In January 1989, the third appointment was finally made. The appeal was scheduled to be heard on April 19 of that year. However, two days before the hearing date Eric Schmertz, the new

member, resigned to take a place in the administration of New York Mayor David Dinkins. Since then, Governor Cuomo has continued to promise a new appointment but has yet to produce, stranding the appeal indefinitely once again.

The GSEU is rejuvenating on the SUNY center campuses, and is looking toward the month of February for a provisional statewide delegate assembly to elect officers and formulate plans to continue the struggle for union recognition.

# NYPIRG's

## General Interest Meeting

Save the Environment!  
Promote Alternative Energy!  
Prevent Consumer Rip-Offs!  
Protect Children's Health!  
Stop Biased Standardized Tests!

## February 13th 7:30

## Union Bi-Level



ALL CANDY BARS  
BUY ONE  
GET ONE  
HALF PRICE  
AT  
STONY SNACKS  
AND  
THE LOOP

## The GSO Needs Your Help!

We are seeking work/study students for office help and volunteers (yes, that's volunteers!) to help distribute the *News and Blues*, get posters and information out to departments, and assist in the operations of the GSO. If you want to help, or would like more information, please call 632-6492 and ask for Ida.

"All contributions to the struggle, no matter how small, serve to speed the day when we rise up to crush those who have oppressed us and our rights are finally recognized."

—George Bidermann

# The Persian Gulf War

*If you're thinking of going....*

The Graduate School has released the following memo:

Graduate School  
State University of New York at Stony Brook  
Stony Brook, New York 11794-4433  
telephone: (516) 632-7040  
FAX: (516) 632-7243

**StonyBrook**

MEMORANDUM

To: Deans, Chairs, Graduate Program Directors.

From: Alexander H. King,  
Vice Provost for Graduate Studies. *AHK*

Subject: Call-Up of Graduate Students.

Date: January 23, 1991.

A small number of our graduate students are reservists in the armed forces. The Graduate School will provide certain services if any of them are called to active duty during the Persian Gulf conflict. Upon presentation of a written activation order by any graduate student in good standing, we will take the following action:

1. Provide an official leave of absence, valid until the semester following demobilization.
2. Cancel registration for the current semester, resulting in the generation of a tuition refund if any was paid.
3. Arrange the cancellation of any housing contract with the division of Residence Life.

Affected students need not complete any forms or write any letters for us to take these actions: all we require is a copy of their order to report for active duty.

cc. W. Strockbine  
D. Bauman  
N. Murphy  
D. Forbush

*If you're thinking  
Of fighting it...*

The following list of organizations are, in various ways, working to stop the war and the trend towards militarization. We are indebted to *The Nation*, from which this was copied.

- National Student and Youth Campaign for Peace in the Middle East**  
c/o USSA, 1012 14th St., N.W., Suite 200, Washington, DC 20005  
(202) 462-1801  
Coordinating national student meeting in Washington, January 27.
- New England War Tax Resistance**  
Box 174, M.I.T. Branch Post Office, Cambridge, MA 02139 (617) 859-0662  
Holds monthly tax resistance seminars, provides counseling.
- New Jewish Agenda**  
64 Fulton St. #1100, New York, NY 10038 (212) 227-5885  
Organizes nationally and through local chapters; supports two-state solution, international conference.
- Palestine Solidarity Committee**  
Box 372, Peck Slip Station, New York, NY 10272 (212) 964-7299  
Works in support of Palestinian self-determination.
- Paper Tiger/Gulf Crisis TV Project**  
339 Lafayette St., New York, NY 10012 (212) 228-6370  
Produces, distributes videotapes recording resistance work nationwide.
- War Resisters League**  
339 Lafayette St., New York, NY 10012 (212) 228-0450  
Provides legal referrals, counseling, outreach to reservists.
- Washington Area Labor Committee Against War in the Middle East**  
c/o SEIU Local 722, 1673 Columbia Rd., N.W., Washington, DC 20009  
(202) 483-6221  
Conducts worker education, mobilization; aims to build official labor support against the war.
- Coalition to Stop U.S. Intervention in the Middle East**  
36 East 12th St., New York, NY 10003 (212) 777-1246  
National network sponsoring rallies, teach-ins, petition drive, January 19 demonstration in Washington.
- Fellowship of Reconciliation**  
Box 271, Nyack, NY 10960 (914) 358-4601  
Organizes people-to-people delegations to Iraq; appeals to Congress, the White House, through its No Blood for Oil Campaign.
- Gulf Peace Action Team**  
Box 598, Putney, VT 05346 (802) 387-2600  
Operates peace camp between hostile forces in the Iraqi desert.
- Hands Off!**  
111 East 14th St., Room 132, New York, NY 10003 (212) 353-2445  
Advocates politically on behalf of military resisters.
- National Campaign for Peace in the Middle East**  
104 Fulton St., Room 303, New York, NY 10038 (212) 227-0221

## English Made Easy Courtesy of SUNY Binghamton

By David Baranov

Reprinted from *The Graduate Voice*

[The Graduate Student Organization would like to attempt an interpretation of a recent memo circulated to Graduate and Teaching Assistants concerning paychecks. In doing so, we pay homage to those whose gift with words has done for the English language what Godzilla did for Tokyo.]

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK  
AT BINGHAMTON  
Personnel Office  
SPECIAL PAYROLL INFORMATION  
GRADUATE AND TEACHING AS-  
SISTANTS  
SPRING SEMESTER 1991

Although Graduate and Teaching Assistants are not employees and are, therefore, not subject to the State's 1991 payroll lag, now being referred to as the "separation lump sum (SLS)," [Translation: Given the fact that many of you may have deluded yourselves into actually thinking that you work for us-- with

many of you going so far as organizing for unionization and representation-- we have decided the best strategy in fighting your efforts is to allow you not to be pay-lagged like all other state employees. Thus, we will be able to maintain our position that you are not employees, eligible for representation. At any rate, it's our bat and ball -- so there!] the Office of the State Comptroller (OSC) in Albany is unable to keep the SLS reduction from being applied to assistantship stipends.

[Translation: Unfortunately, while our political posturing looks great in dealing with you guys, the people who actually administer stuff can't quite figure out why you're not employees. Therefore, they say we have to include you in the state's SLS (or "Sometime Later Sucker") plan.]

SUNY Binghamton is taking steps to temporarily increase gross biweekly stipend payments by the amount necessary to offset the SLS reduction. [Translation: Never at a loss to fight unioniza-

tion, SUNY Binghamton has decided to sacrifice other aspects of its academic program to continue to fight you. We can't really discuss where we got the money-- let's just say we "found it" -- but anyway, here it is, so you see as we said, you are not employees.]

While the increased biweekly gross stipend will equal the normal biweekly gross stipend after the SLS reduction is applied, some minor change in the net (take-home) stipend may still occur. This is due to the impact of the temporarily increased gross biweekly stipend on withholding for Federal and State taxes, for which neither the campus nor OSC can make adjustment. [Translation: Oh, okay, there's one minor detail. Now you understand we don't mention this just because you signed an agreement to work for us at a certain stipend level and now we're changing the conditions of your employment-- I mean your volunteer service. We just mention this stuff because we're nice guys. Anyway, you see you could be

looking at some loss of income. Not much, of course, though we don't know how much. Or at least it's best we don't print how much in a politically motivated memo.]

The temporarily increased biweekly gross stipend will begin in the check dated January 30, 1991 and will end with the check dated March 27, 1991. The biweekly gross stipend will return to normal in the check dated April 10, 1991.

Questions concerning this matter should be addressed to the Personnel Office.

[Some possible questions:

If we are not employees, why is our income loss tied to changes in state employees' paychecks?

Thanks for the favor of sacrificing Binghamton's academic program for your political purposes, but wouldn't we do better under the SLS plan where we'd at least get the money back in the end, theoretically?

Wouldn't things have been handled somewhat differently if we had a union to represent us?]