

# News and Blues

Volume 2, Number 4  
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## SUNY Appeals Favorable GSEU Ruling

By George Bidermann

As expected, SUNY recently filed an appeal of the October 8 Public Employment Relations Board decision ruling that graduate students are state employees entitled to the same unionization rights as most other state employees. This action has automatically stayed any certification election until all appeals are exhausted, which could take

from several months to more than two years.

The filing of the appeal, initiated at the request of Chancellor Bruce Johnstone and with the apparent consent of the SUNY Board of Trustees, contradicts the wording of a January 24 trustees resolution that stated the Board "will continue to look to the Public Employment Relations Board for the definitive resolution of the issues of the status

and collective negotiation rights of supported graduate students under the Taylor Law." Trustees and SUNY officials have been at a loss to adequately explain what that resolution meant given their current action, according to officials of the Graduate Student Employees Union. The GSEU has been seeking to hold a certification election for graduate TA's and GA's since it first filed its petition before PERB in 1984.

"This is typical SUNY union busting," said Dominic Chan, GSEU statewide president and vice president of the GSO at Stony Brook. "Their appeal has no merit; it is just a delaying tactic to stall the process by which we gain our legal rights. They are hoping this movement is going to give up but they're wrong—dead wrong."

The appeal, filed in State Supreme Court on November 7, puts SUNY in the odd position of suing PERB, another state agency, as well as the GSEU and its parent union, the Communications Workers of America. The appeal's petition states that the PERB ruling was "arbitrary, capricious, unreasonable, an abuse of discretion, without justification in law and fact, not supported by substantial evidence, contrary to the record before PERB and in excess of the authority conferred on PERB by law." It also says the State Legislature never intended to include graduate students under the provisions of the Taylor Law, which governs public employee unionization rights, and that PERB's decision "violates the Legislature's express delegation to the Board of Trustees... to make decisions regarding the provision of educational services in New York State."

But Chris Vestuto, a GSEU organizer, called the points raised in the appeal "absolute balderdash. If the legislature had never intended graduate-students to be included, it would have *excluded* us from the law, as it did certain other groups of state employees." He also referred to the Trustees' resolution and a letter by Trustee Nancy Nielsen, dated November 29, 1990, which stated that "PERB will render a decision and we will all abide by it." SUNY's claim that the PERB decision violates the trustees' powers is inconsistent and makes no sense, according to Vestuto.

"It's obvious that they only expected everyone to abide  
(Continued on Page 3)

## Vice Provost for Graduate Studies Resigning Position in January

By Fons Haffmans  
GSO Secretary

After more than four years of administrative service Dr. Alex King, the vice-provost for Graduate Studies, has resigned. His resignation will take effect in January and a search committee has been formed to select his replacement.

In a recent conversation with this reporter, King discussed some of the changes he has seen during his tenure as vice provost. He will return to his department as a professor in Materials Science and Engineering. He first came into office in July 1987, right after the strike by graduate students and in the middle of the Tent City protest. Asked what he thought the impact of the strike had Dr. King replied that the most of the things achieved during the strike would have happened anyway. The most significant exception is that the graduate student stipends were raised significantly through the strike. It is difficult to attribute the rise in applications to graduate school to higher stipends alone. The number of applications started to rise nationally and Stony Brook started to recruit more vigorously.

### Budget Cuts

During King's tenure the university has faced approximately nine budget cuts. There is enormous pressure to reduce the cost of higher education, which might lead to a reduction in state lines. This reduction may be offset by gains in other lines. Up to now Stony Brook dealt with the budget cuts by deferring maintenance, no longer paying for telephones and mail from state funds, and cutting money for faculty travel. But the departments have reached the end of the line and the next round of cuts will probably result in cuts to faculty, TA/GA and staff lines.

### Research

We then discussed the long-range direction of Stony Brook and more specifically the question of the research effort in Stony can increase. President Marburger has said on more than one occasion that Stony Brook cannot "afford" any more research in the near future. Sometimes the State has to match research grants; the state funds the infrastructure necessary for the research. According to King, the university must stimulate the faculty to apply for multiple research grants. He noted that it is common for faculty in Stony Brook to have only one grant at a time. Having more grants would reduce the cost per research dollar and might ultimately be financially beneficial for the university. Other universities have strong incentives in place to encourage faculty to apply for more than one grant. Part of a professor's salary might come from a grant, for example. The Marine Sciences Center in Stony Brook

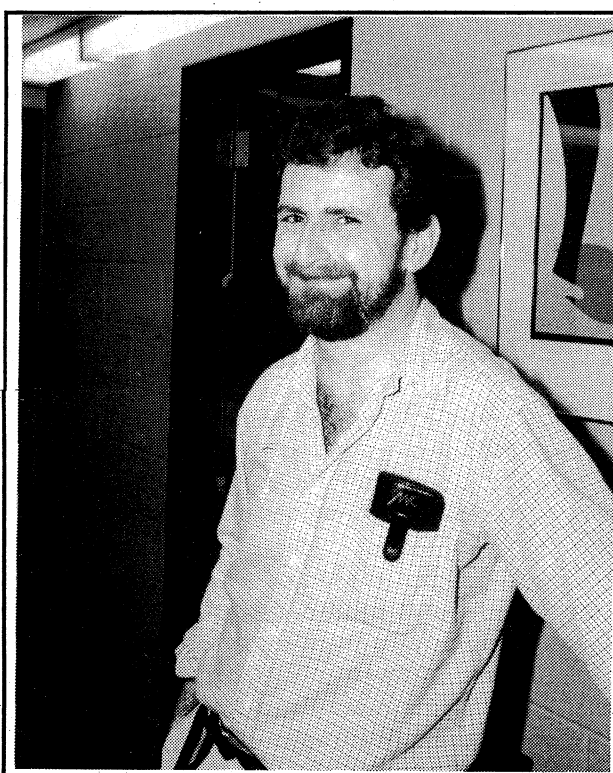


Photo by Greg Forte

Alex King

already works in this way. The administration is very reluctant to push the faculty. The main objection seems to be that writing grants will take away time from research.

### Unionization

Asked whether he thought unionization would be beneficial, King replied that it could be the best or the worst thing that ever happened to graduate education. It depends on what the graduate students are able to negotiate with the Governor's Office of Employee Relations and who will pay for it. In the ideal world they would negotiate things like a health plan and a decent stipend. That's good for the students. It would be great if the cost for all of this would not come out of the SUNY budget. However, if the SUNY budget is reduced to pay for these benefits this will in all probability mean a cut in GA and TA lines. The experience of other states-- like New Jersey and Wisconsin-- where graduate students unionized is that the costs of the benefits came out the university budget. The experience with other state agencies in New York is mixed: sometimes the budget is increased to pay for the benefits, and sometimes it's not. In fact SUNY is currently facing the problem of meeting certain UUP-negotiated pay increases out of its operating budget without assistance from the state.

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# Pay Lag Must Be Avoided At All Costs

The *News and Blues* reported in its last issue that the Office of the State Comptroller (OSC) would not agree to let the Research Foundation handle the payroll of the Graduate and Teaching Assistants.

The payroll had to be transferred back to the State. Comptroller Ned Regan's office refused to sign off on the contract, claiming that the transfer of GA/TA lines-- which are considered employee lines-- to the Research Foundation removed the office's ability to audit these expenditures. But SUNY had already made the change, and the transfer back to SUNY's payroll meant that the GA/TA's faced the real possibility of a pay-lag.

GA/TA's who are transferred back to SUNY's payroll would be put on a separate payroll and would miss one paycheck, most likely in January. Over the last few weeks the GSO Executive Council and the GSO Senate has voiced concern to the Administration about the impact of such a pay-lag on graduate student employees. The GSO Senate endorsed a letter asking that the Stony Brook administration give GA/TA's information by Monday, December 2 about the pay lag so that they might plan for going four weeks without a paycheck.

In the meantime, representatives of SUNY met with the Office of the State Comptroller (OSC) in an effort to get it to reverse its decision. However, as members of the SUNY administration have recently reported to the executive council, there is a real possibility that the lag may be avoided. OSC representatives, while reportedly refusing to reverse their decision, said that the OSC would accept a letter from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) requesting that the GA/TA-payroll not be lagged. SUNY is now trying to get such a letter from the OMB. If they are successful, and Stony Brook officials seem to be very optimistic, the GA/TA's will not face a pay-lag.

As the holiday seasons and the cold months of

winter approach, we need not state too strongly how hard it is for graduate students who are independent and not independently wealthy (or even "comfortable"). Stony Brook and SUNY officials can pay more than lip service to the plight of graduate student employees by avoiding the

pay lag, either through efforts at the state level or within SUNY. To ask some of the university's lowest-paid employees to go four weeks without a paycheck in the dead of winter would be quite a cruel present during the holidays. Let's hope that SUNY officials are successful.



Photo by Greg Forte

The gravel lot: One more broken promise.

## For Those Who Don't Know: Brief Definitions of the Players

This issue of the *News and Blues* is devoted, to some degree, to the question of unionization for graduate-student employees. It contains a section, beginning on Page 5, full of opinion pieces regarding unionization.

It is the GSO's role to present an open forum for graduate students to discuss unionization, and the *News and Blues* will continue to provide such a forum as the appeals process inches forward. The GSO itself has not taken a position on unionization other than supporting the right to a vote. It should be clear that all contributions represent the opinions of the authors only and the contributors are responsible for any inaccuracies in their articles. Most contributors assume some knowledge of the reader regarding the GSEU structure and history. We believe they are a bit too optimistic and below seek to provide some capsule definitions and information regarding the major players and key terms used often in the articles:

### GSEU: Graduate Students Employees Union.

Constitution is available on request from the GSO. The Statewide Executive Board consists of 4 officers, two representatives from the four university centers (Albany, Binghamton, Buffalo and Stony Brook) and one at large representative.

GSEU is affiliated with CWA.

### CWA: Communication Workers of America.

A nationwide union primarily representing ITT employees. In New York State CWA has branched out into the Health Services and other industries.

GSEU has signed an affiliation agreement with CWA. Under the affiliation agreement part of the dues GSEU members pay will go to CWA. CWA provides GSEU with financial and legal support.

### PERB: Public Employees Relations Board.

PERB decides-- among other things-- whether a union has enough interest among state employees to

seek recognition as their bargaining agent. PERB ruled in October that GA's and TA's are State employees within the meaning of the Civil Service Law (Taylor Law) and have the right to be represented by a union. This decision is under appeal at the urging of SUNY. The PERB decision, if it stands, would give GSEU the right to hold a **certification election** to find out whether GA/TA's in the SUNY system would like the GSEU to be their bargaining agent.

### Certification Election:

The election mentioned above will be held SUNY-wide. All GA/TA's will be allowed to vote, and a simple majority must approve the union. Virtually all GA/TA's are at the four university centers. SUNY's opposition to the inclusion of RA's in GSEU's petition led the GSEU to drop RA's from their bid for recognition before PERB, so RA's will not be voting. RA's seeking to unionize would have to petition separately for recognition. GSEU has stated that it intends to organize RA's as part of the union. But it is unclear whether RA's can be included as part of GSEU's bargaining unit.

The vote will be whether the GA/TA's want GSEU to represent them. No other union will be on the ballot. A certification election for the GSEU has been stayed until the appeal of the PERB decision is exhausted, and will not be held until next Fall at the earliest.

**Bargaining:** GSEU will bargain with the State of New York if they win the election. The **Public Employees' Fair Employment Act (Article 14 of the Civil Service Law)**, also known as the **Taylor Law**, provides the structure of the negotiations.

### Taylor Law:

The Taylor Law determines how unions can win the right to represent a certain group of State employees, and provides the guidelines by which unions negotiate contracts with the State, among other things. It also prohibits strikes or the endorsement of strikes by public employees.

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# Women in Physical Science Discussion Group Started

By Kim-Marie Pacanovsky  
Department of Earth & Space Sciences

Must women work harder to accomplish more than their male peers in order to be perceived as their equals? This was one question addressed at the November 13 organizational meeting of a new Women in Physical Science group on campus. The

participation of more than 35 female graduate students and professors from Mathematics, Applied Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, and Earth and Space Sciences demonstrated that there is indeed a need for women to share their experiences in these historically male-dominated fields.

The inspiration for forming a Women in

Physical Science group on campus was the success of similar groups at MIT and other top research universities. Dusa McDuff, professor of Mathematics and one of the initiators of the group, expressed her hope that the club become a forum for discussion of the problems students face in their graduate education. At the first meeting, most present agreed that women do feel like they have to be better to be seen as equal. This fact, coupled with the lack of female role models in top research positions and higher education, can paint a seemingly hopeless picture for some. Could this be a contributing factor to the under-representation of female doctorates in the physical sciences and mathematics?

Women have many problems in their careers that are a sole and direct consequence of their sex. This is no big surprise to most women. The problem exists, but what can be done about it? At the first meeting, it was agreed upon that women need to deal with the problems of existing in a "male world" at a younger age. McDuff suggested that undergraduate women who are interested in graduate school be invited to the meetings. According to Hannah Nekvasil, Assistant Professor of Earth and Space Sciences, many of her brightest undergraduate female students lack self-confidence and

often convince themselves they will fail an exam. Conversely, she has seen some less brilliant male students enter the exam room with an overconfident "this one is going to be a breeze" attitude.

Nekvasil's observations demonstrate that a woman's unfounded feelings of inadequacy need to be addressed early on. Furthermore, women will never achieve true equality and the need for women's support groups will remain until the attitudes of men change. Many of the Stony Brook women agreed that overt sexual harassment is not generally a problem in academia, but the more subtle forms of harassment are quite common.

The next meeting of Women in Physical Science is scheduled for Wednesday, December 4 at 6 PM in the meeting room of the Math Tower Basement. The group will plan events for the Spring 1992 semester. Future meetings will include brief presentations of graduate student research interests. Additionally, successful researchers from within and outside our university community will also be invited to speak. Men are encouraged to attend. If you want to discuss your experiences as a woman in this university, or if you want to offer support for your peers, please attend. For more information, contact Dusa McDuff at 632-8290.

## SUNY Appeals GSEU Case—

(Continued from Page 1)

by PERB's decision if it went *against* the GSEU," Vestuto said. "Their shameful duplicity cannot be hidden from the public record."

The appeal will now enter a lengthy process that, depending on the outcomes of the Supreme Court review, could take up to two more years before SUNY's options are exhausted. Vestuto said that CWA's attorneys, who have been handling the case for the GSEU, would motion for preference. This would place the case at the head of the court's docket and speed up the appeal.

If the five-member court rules unanimously to uphold the PERB decision and makes no substantial changes in the ruling, SUNY will have to petition to take the appeal one step further. SUNY would not be automatically entitled to an appeal; the court would have to sanction it. But if the ruling is not unanimous or a change in the substance of PERB's ruling takes place at the Supreme Court level, SUNY would be entitled to file an appeal. Since State law prevents certification elections from taking

place while a case is under appeal, SUNY could conceivably put off a vote for a few more years before it runs out of appeals.

The case had been before PERB since 1984, when the GSEU first filed for recognition. After an initial decision by the PERB director against the GSEU in 1987, the case remained deadlocked for almost four years while one member was missing from the PERB Board and the two sitting on it were split on the issue. New appointees this summer heard the case and issued a unanimous ruling reversing the director's 1987 decision.

SUNY's objection to the inclusion of RA's in the original GSEU petition, based on the fact that RA's are employed by the Research Foundation, led the GSEU to drop RA's from the petition. The GSEU has said it will organize RA's and seek through PERB to include them in its bargaining unit once it is certified as the representative unit for GA's and TA's.

Vestuto said the first hearing on SUNY's appeal will most likely take place in early January.

## Croatian Students Planning Protest Against Yugoslavian Suppression

By Kresimir Penavic  
Department of Applied Math

On Thursday, December 5, the Croatian Student Society is staging a protest meeting against the war in Croatia. Demonstrations will take place at Noon by the Main Library on the Academic Mall. Speakers will hopefully include Rep. George Hochbrueckner of Centereach, who has been contacted but hasn't confirmed yet, and Marko Prelec from Yale University.

This is the first action of the recently formed CSS. If you would like to get personally involved in the activities of the CSS, please contact Kreso or Silva (588-9341) or Darko (632-5192). Membership in the CSS is open to all people of good will concerned about the situation in Croatia.

For those who feel they have to know a bit more, here is an outline of what's been going on:

For almost half a year now, Croatia has been pillaged and sacked by the last communist army in Europe only for wishing to be free, while feeble European peace initiatives (13 so far) are being blatantly broken. Dozens of towns and hundreds of villages have been reduced to ashes, with all their residents either killed or displaced. Croatian economic and cultural resources are being systematically destroyed. Schools, nurseries, hospitals, museums, and churches are being turned to rubble. As winter approaches, there is an imminent danger of famine and epidemic diseases. Cluster, napalm and phosphorus bombs, as well as missiles and chemical weapons (which, by the way, the Yugoslavian Army has been selling to Saddam Hussein for years) are being used to eradicate the Croatian nation in the areas it had lived-- as the majority-- for centuries.


If that is the price that has to be paid for

freedom, the Croatian nation is willing to pay it. Yet the Croatian people cannot understand that what the Western nations are doing to stop the slaughtering is so insubstantial; it is as if they are lacking true will to help, although these nations are being pressed by growing public concern. Even a symbolic step of recognizing Croatian independence seems to be a giant one for Western governments.

A dangerous precedent is thus being set. Communism in the other countries of Eastern Europe isn't dead yet and the Western attitude towards the Croatian crisis can only encourage other (would-be) dictatorships to do the same. The USSR, Romania, Bulgaria, Albania... the list is too long to write.

Moreover, if Western governments think that the Yugo-Serbian Stalinist dictatorship will stop at conquering Croatia, they are deadly wrong. Such a dictatorship can stay in power only by perpetually inventing "inner and outer enemies." An eternal "inner enemy" has been found in the Albanian minority, whose civil and political rights most closely resemble those of African-Americans in the last century. As to who will be the next "outer enemy," the question remains open. But since inventing enemies on which one can blame all the problems is what communists are especially good at, there is no doubt one will be found. As for the candidates, there are Serbian minorities in Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria, which could, as they have in Croatia, serve as a trigger to the hostilities.

This madness has to be stopped before it is too late. Please join us and show your support. Or just come by to get better informed as to what's going on in Croatia, Europe, or the world.



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# International Student Spotlight

## **Health Insurance Info For International Students**

*The following memo was received from Rose Brown, Health Insurance Coordinator for the office of Foreign Student Services:*

All students on non-immigrant visas who are register at SUNY Stony Brook, whether full-time or part-time, are required by State law to take the health insurance policy provided by the State University of New York. The charge is automatically added to the student's account. The insurance policy is a very good one. It covers pre-existing conditions and pays 100% of most medically necessary expenses, provided the student's initial visit is to the Student Health Center (Infirmary). Within strict limitations, waivers can be granted for all or part of this fee; but there is a deadline in applying, and application must be made by direct contact with the Health Insurance Coordinator in Foreign Student Services.

Instructions for enrolling in the insurance or applying for a waiver can be picked up in Foreign Student Services, 113 Central Hall, Monday-Friday, 10 AM to 4 PM. The Health Insurance Coordinator is available Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, from 10 AM to 12:30 PM. Telephone: (516) 632-7025.

The fee for 1991-92 was \$471. New students enrolling for the Spring term will be charged a Spring/Summer fee of \$275. The cost of summer registration, only, is \$118.

Let me stress that the insurance charge will automatically be added to the student's account regardless of the student's action unless Dr. Lynn King Morris or myself has personally granted a waiver.

## **The Italian Cultural Society will be having a Party**

**On Thursday, December 5**

**Main Lounge,  
Keller International Hall  
8 PM to Midnight**

**Also, a Pizza Party will be held  
this Wednesday, November 27  
at 1:45 in the Main Library  
Room N4061  
(the Pizza's Free!)**

### For more information, contact:

President: Stephanie Preziosi 797-7035  
Vice President: Hanis Majzoub 689-1855  
Treasurer: Renee Rosignoli 632-4602  
Secretary: Alisa Cataldo 928-8935

*The International Student Spotlight is devoted to clubs and events for international graduate students and those who would like to learn about the international-student community at Stony Brook. We invite all organizations to submit material for this section; we can also print brief notices in languages besides English. But we need your input. Call George Bidermann at 632-6492 if you would like to write something or publicize an event that your organization is sponsoring.*

## **New F-1 Regulations For International Students**

New F-1 Regulations have been published that revise several procedures for international students seeking to extend their visas and work in the United States. The Office of Foreign Student Services has released information regarding these changes, and students should stop by there (Room 113 Central Hall) for copies of the new policies.

The three major changes affect student status, work permits, and post-completion practical training:

**Status:** Students who will not complete their studies by the projected date on their initial I-20 form must file for extension, and under the new guidelines, the "Grace Period" for extensions has been cancelled. Students who have either applied for extension and not yet gotten a response or are currently in the grace period must fill out new forms and have a new I20AB processed by Dr. Lynn King Morris, director of the Office of Foreign Student Services.

**Work Permits:** New authorization for pre-completion training, except for curricular training, is no longer available. Regulations are being revised, and will be available soon.

**Practical Training:** Post-completion practical training is now available for one year only and students must have Employment Authorization Documents (EAD's) approved before beginning employment. No job offer is needed for obtaining the EAD.

Students with two-year programs and graduation dates of May 1991 must apply for extension **at once**. Students with four-year programs and graduation dates of December 1990 must also apply **at once**. Students with graduation dates of December 1991 who will not graduate must apply **at once**. And finally, if you have already applied for extension and have not yet heard from the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), you must apply-- you guessed it-- **at once**.

Call the Office of Foreign Student Affairs (632-7025) to make an appointment if you belong to one of the categories of students listed above.

## Attention:

*Thanksgiving Dinner for Korean Students*

*Has Been Moved*

*from Saturday, November 30*

*to Friday, November 29*

*Commons Room,*

*New Graduate Apartments at 6 PM*



# 'Union Now!' Or 'Union No!'

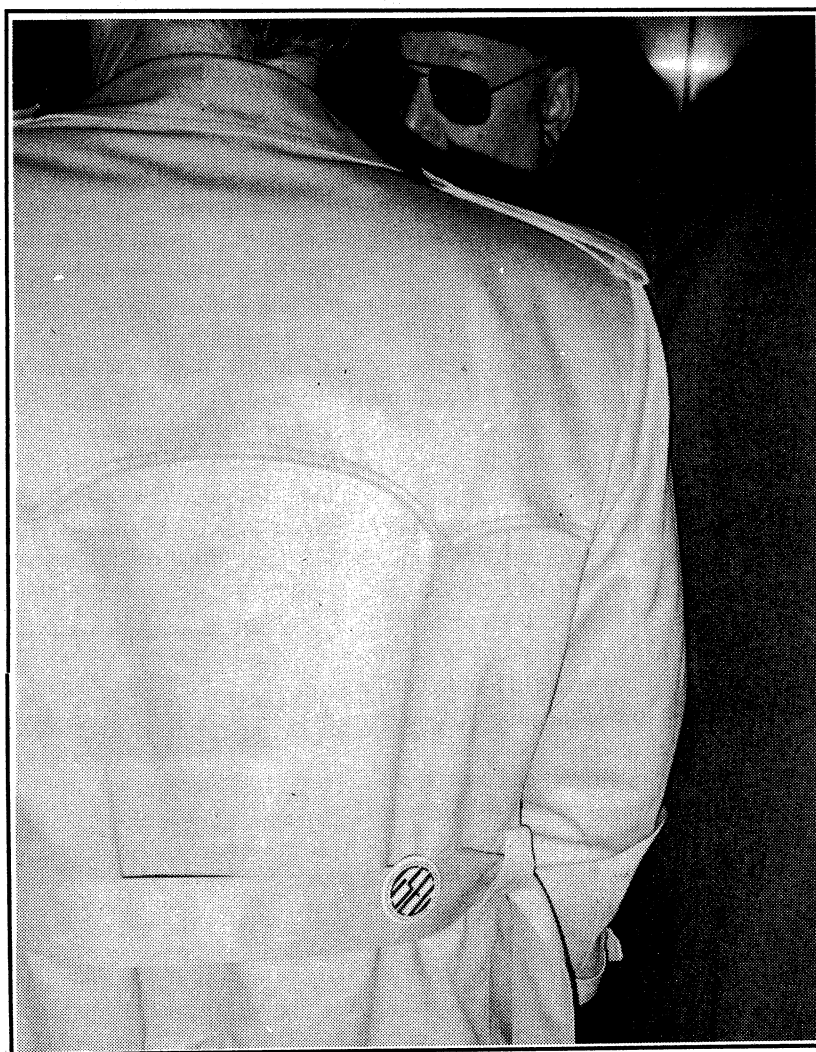
A Special Supplement to *The GSO News and Blues*

*This special section of viewpoints has been pulled together to open a dialogue on an issue that on the surface seems pretty simple, but actually involves a great deal more: what would voting to unionize mean for Stony Brook's graduate-student employees?*

*The prospect of voting to certify the Graduate Student Employees Union (GSEU) as the bargaining agent for TA's and GA's has been snatched away by the State's appeal, at SUNY's urging, of the October PERB decision. That unanimous ruling found that GA's and TA's were indeed State employees with the right to collectively bargain. The appeal, if successful, would continue to deny graduate students a voice on this issue. And even if the appeal is unsuccessful, which seems likely, SUNY will have succeeded in delaying a certification election for anywhere from three months to several years, depending on how fast the case is litigated.*

*The viewpoints in this section were not solicited to present the views of the graduate-student community: they are simply the responses of eight authors who were either asked to write or took the initiative to write for this section. We would like to see many more pieces like these written, particularly by members of the international student community and female graduate-student employees. There are many views out there, and it is hard to say what "graduate students," as a whole, think about unionization. But what does seem clear is that there are many questions people have, and it is the answers to these questions that will determine the depth of support for the GSEU on campus.*

*We hope to continue to bring you information and opinions on the union movement in future issues of the News and Blues. And we hope some of you will add your voices to the debate.*



## Some Common Questions About the GSEU

By Dominic Chan

GSEU Statewide President

Recently, some graduate students have expressed reservations about unionization. This is a natural reaction for people to have whenever they confronted with something new. In this article, I will address some of these concerns and hopefully my fellow graduate TAs, GAs, and RAs will seek to learn more about the issue by contacting the GSEU organizing committee on this campus.

Unionization of graduate student employees is not a phenomenon relegated to SUNY. The Universities of Michigan, Wisconsin, Florida, Oregon, and Rutgers have employed unionized TAs and RAs for several years. More recently, graduate unions have been recognized at University of California at Berkeley and at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. The trend is growing; hundreds of graduate students at Cornell, Yale, and the University of California at Santa Cruz have also engaged in unionization drives.

The university's argument that unionization hurts our prestige just doesn't hold up. In fact, unionization helps to increase the prestige of graduate education at the university. By having a strong advocate for graduate education on the statewide level, (something that is lacking now), we would help to influence the decisions which affect SUNY.

I'm often asked what graduate students would get out of unionization. Well at other schools, they are provided with

health benefits comparable to faculty and staff. Stipends at unionized schools range from \$9,000-\$17,000 a year. Should informal methods fail, there are legally binding grievance procedures that these universities are mandated to follow, unlike SUNY, which can ignore its so-called "grievance" procedures whenever they become inconvenient for the administration. If an impasse is reached through the collective bargaining process, public unions like GSEU would have the right to binding arbitration by a mutually agreed-upon third party.

But most importantly, a union provides a voice in how SUNY treats us. Currently, decisions are made from the top down. Whenever it wants to, SUNY can cut our lines, lag our pay, etc., unilaterally. If we were an organized collective with legal recognition, SUNY would be legally obligated to bargain with us on the conditions of our employment.

Another common question usually deals with GSEU's relationship to the Communications Workers of America. Several years ago, graduate students made the decision to affiliate with CWA based on CWA's democratic reputation. In the affiliation agreement, CWA guaranteed autonomy to the internal structure of GSEU. It would also pay for organizers and lawyers to help us achieve recognition. Another key factor in deciding to affiliate with CWA was that graduate students could set their own dues structure.

All important decisions affecting the GSEU would be made

by its membership, and only its membership.

From the very beginning, graduate student employees wanted to ensure a democratic union of their own. GSEU's constitution places term limits on union officers. Only graduate students are allowed to serve on the statewide executive committee.

The length of time to finish a degree seems to get longer and longer. In the meantime, the number of years graduate employees are funded gets shorter and shorter. In addition, real wages have decreased over the years. Graduate students were paid \$2,600 minimum per year in 1967. In 1991 dollars this translates to over \$10,400 per year. We need a union to change these statistics.

There seems to be a mistaken impression that the GSEU is some outside group of people who want to impose their will on all graduate students. Nothing could be further from the truth. The GSEU is nothing more than the sum of its members. If you want to affect what the GSEU is doing you need to get involved. Don't just tell GSEU what it should and shouldn't be doing. Those graduate students who get involved and help build the organization will be the people who determine where the GSEU is headed. If you are interested in helping determine the course *your* union should take, want more information, or have questions, please call Jerry Raymond, the GSEU campus organizer, at

632-7702 or 246-5662.

# Students, Unions, and the Denial of Reality

By Fred Mayer  
Department of Psychology

"Students can have the kind of school they want-- or even something else entirely if they want-- because there isn't going to be any school without them." — *Jerry Farber* [1]

In modern societies, university students play a critical role in the maintenance and reproduction of prevailing social orders. This follows from the fact that modern social orders are organized, controlled, and legitimized by intellectuals; a class composed of individuals who voluntarily acquire their knowledge and beliefs as students. Because students are voluntary participants in academic institutions, they have the power to accept or reject the lessons of their professors and, by extension, society at large. Whenever enough students decide to reject what they are being told to accept, the prevailing social order fails to be reproduced -- and before long, social change occurs. In such situations, students can become either the vanguard of progress towards a better society or, alternatively, shock troops for the forces of retrogression and destruction. In either case, they have in their hands more power than any army, any government, or any university administration. The use of this power has only one requirement: the courage to say "no."

## The History of Student Power

The validity of these claims is easily supported. History is filled with examples of social movements initiated by students. For example, consider the following episode in China's history, as told by J. Mason Gentzler:

"In early May of [1919] it was learned in Peking that the Versailles Peace Conference had awarded former German rights in the Shantung peninsula to Japan. Indignation -- at the powers, at Japan, and at pro-Japanese 'traitors' within the Peking government -- led to a demonstration of some 3,000 Peking students on May 4. The arrest of hundreds of the students only inspired more to join the protest. Within days the fever had spread to other cities. Students organized and demonstrated, workers struck, and merchants closed their shops as gestures of solidarity with the patriots. A nation-wide boycott of Japanese goods began. The government was helpless, and for a brief time it became evident that armed force was not the ultimate source of political authority." [2]

In this country, during the early sixties, students were among the first to cross racial boundaries whose existence later became illegal as a result of the subsequent Civil Rights movement. In the middle and late sixties students were the first to challenge U.S. imperialism, thereby initiating a social movement that eventually stopped our insane war waged in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. In May 1968, students in France nearly brought down their government. More recently, in 1989, students gave their lives by the hundreds in China for the sake of democracy, and as a result China is undergoing change (without any help from the West). Finally, let it not be forgotten that -- less than four months ago -- young students played a critical

role in the streets of Moscow, where several gave their lives to stop a cynical and reactionary coup d'etat perpetrated by a group of tired old men in uniforms.

Here at home, however, no such idealism can currently be found among the vast majority of university students. In our country, now well into a major economic depression, those who are weak and without resources are tossed aside like garbage -- left to fight for existence in the streets, without homes, dependent on the charity of a vanishing few. Meanwhile, the criminal government of the National Security State of America carries out vile acts of mass murder, flagrantly violates both domestic and international law, and propagates lies and distortions -- while at the very same time, with full knowledge of these facts, well-fed students calmly go to their classes during the day and blithely vote against anti-war resolutions at night. How is this possible? What has gone wrong? The argument that students are not aware of the facts doesn't hold water. There's something else happening here, but what it is isn't exactly clear.

## Commodification of Intellectual Labor

"...among the intellectuals, only solitary individuals are left who consider what they are doing in terms of work and not in terms of making a living. What we are confronted with is the prospect of a society of laborers without labor, that is, without the only activity left to them. Surely, nothing could be worse." — *Hannah Arendt* [3]

"The idea that the university is a community of scholars is a myth. The professors are less interested in teaching students than in yanking the levers of their new combines so that these machines will grow bigger and go faster. The university has in large part been reduced to serving as banker-broker for the professors' outside interests. The charming elitism of the professors has long since given way to the greed of the social and political scientists whose

manipulative theories aim only at political power. Meanwhile the undergraduate students lie in campus holding pens, while graduate apprentices read them stories."

— *James Ridgeway* [4]

The roots of this sad situation can be found in several places. First and foremost was the undebated decision by physical scientists to become whores for the U.S. military establishment. The first controlled chain reaction preceding the development of the atomic bomb was carried out at the University of Chicago. The development of the self-deteriorating proximity fuse was carried out at the Applied Physics Laboratory at Johns Hopkins. Radar research was carried out at the Radiation Laboratory at MIT. Following the completely unjustified destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, atomic scientists still didn't understand what they were doing. The subsequent development of the hydrogen bomb met with virtually no resistance.

Since World War II, this corrupt relationship has only grown worse. In the 1990 fiscal year, MIT -- the 40th largest military contractor in the country -- received over \$460 million from the department of defense, while Johns Hopkins received over \$374 million. [5] This trend is not limited to private universities. For example, during the last four fiscal years, SUNY campuses have received over \$19 million in military contracts (not including research grants. Furthermore, the blood money flowing into universities is not used exclusively for research. For instance, consider the Textron corporation, whose Bell helicopters were used by the Guatemalan Air Force in a war against the Guatemalan people. One of the profiting directors of Textron (since 1978) is Howard R. Swearer, who in 1988 was none other than the president of Brown University. [6] Unfortunately, such academic-corporate ties -- completely unrelated to research funding -- have become increasingly common in

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# An Effective Voice Is Needed

By J. Jeff McConnell  
Department of Sociology

In last issue's GSA Corner, Thomas Pepper discussed the negative effects of unionization for graduate employees. The article contained errors, both factual and theoretical, that need to be addressed. Pepper claims to have set a level of discourse for discussions on unionization but has, unfortunately, entirely confounded such a discussion.

First, Mr. Pepper claims that the Communications Workers of America (CWA) was originally an industrial union that lost its manufacturing base. This is simply wrong. From its inception, CWA was designed to organize workers in the communications and service sectors. Whether they were telephone operators at NYNEX or New Jersey public employees, CWA intended to give them a voice in the workplace. Although it is true that there are many industrial unions which fit Mr. Pepper's description, CWA is not one of them.

Mr. Pepper also claims that unions have "disempowered" workers because of the bureaucratic machinery of unions. There is no doubt that some of this is true. However, this statement is not generalizable to the entire labor movement. During the Hormel strike of the 1980s, the United Food and Commercial Workers tried to squelch local workers from advocating for their rights. Our regional CWA head was one of the few national labor leaders willing to stand up for the local workers at Hormel. It is not clear from Mr. Pepper's article exactly what "power" he believes we stand to lose by organizing.

A discussion of what position labor in the U.S. might find itself in without union organization is pointless here, but an assessment of the current conditions of our employment is not; a consideration of what collective bargaining processes can offer towards securing some of the basic rewards enjoyed by other workers and graduate students at other institutions is apropos. I suggest this as the starting point for the union debate. Whether the potential outcomes of unionizing will empower graduate students or leave them disempowered is a matter to be discursively resolved and subsequently reflected in the union vote.

Mr. Pepper's conceptualization of the role we as "producers of knowledge" play in society in return for precious tax dollars is striking in its naivety. Notably, he argues that we are supported "to participate in a discourse which is not common," and "must be believed to possess some significant cultural capital with symbolic value necessary to the

maintenance of society." It is difficult to think of a country among those of Western Europe, with which we share a cultural history, in which this idealized portrait of the intellectual is less true than in the United States.

Universities in the U.S., and state university systems in particular, have been constructed for two basic reasons. First, we as professionals provide college educations to the children of the taxpayers who support us in order that their offspring may maintain or improve their socio-economic status. Second, we are organized to undertake research as commissioned by government bodies or financially notable corporate entities -- chiefly to maintain *their* positions in the socio-economic structure. In the United States, the intellectual has never been accredited with the culturally symbolic value of even the lowliest "professional" baseball player. We are, if anything, tolerated for the reasons above.

Our service to the tax-paying public -- at least that for which we are supported -- is entirely concrete. Graduate employees contribute an objective component of these services. To the extent that the taxpaying public values higher education and research, graduate students should be remunerated and represented as essential employees. Mr. Pepper is correct to note that the language of surplus value is a hazy one for conceptualizing the political economy of education. Rather, it is in the political domain where the financial support for the state university system is negotiated that our value to educational and research services must be recognized -- or overlooked. It seems to me that graduate employees lack any effective voice or representation in this domain. Local graduate student governments have their limits on what can be accomplished. Unionization would change this inequitable power relationship between graduate employees and the state.

Mr. Pepper does raise a couple of good points. I'm not sure in what sense graduate students can be viewed as having any autonomy under the state, except by virtue of a benevolent indifference. Mr. Pepper is correct, however, in raising the question of our autonomy inasmuch as it may be impacted by unionization and the subsequent relation of the union and the state. Although I reject Pepper's notion that our ability to "produce knowledge" in itself has the power to stabilize the vagaries of the workplace, I also agree with him that the union debate rests largely on our assessment of the union's ability to do so.

I look forward to this issue of the *News and Blues* for some clarification of these issues.

The next issue of  
*The GSO News and Blues*  
Will be published  
on December 16.

If you are interested in  
**CONTRIBUTING**  
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# Victims With Our Hands Tied Behind Our Backs

By John Nolan  
GSO President

As president of the Graduate Student Organization and a Research Assistant, I have learned from "the inside" why a union is crucial for SUNY graduate employees. I am convinced that without union contracts we will continue to be the soft money on campus. In fact, during these hard times, the administration is talking very seriously about making drastic cuts in the number of state-supported graduate lines. Without a union, we have no solid ground from which to negotiate. Certainly health-care benefits and reasonable wage increases will not be realized. We are victims with our hands tied behind our backs.

There are a lot of theoretical and abstract arguments that can be made about the pros and cons of unionization for graduate-student employees at SUNY. There are a lot of "What ifs..." that can be raised. The whole issue can be made to look pretty complex. What it all boils down to in the final analysis, however, is one simple question: "Do graduate-student employees want to build an organization that gives us a real voice in the decisions and policies that affect us?"

Just for the sake of argument, however, we should take a look at some of the most commonly raised questions about unionization:

**"Will graduate student unionization damage student/advisor relationships by creating a confrontational atmosphere?"**

In reality, unionization tends to stabilize student-advisor relationships by creating a situation where the ground rules for workloads, job responsibilities, etc. are clearly laid out in advance, and students are not forced into a situation where they must personally confront their advisors, thus potentially jeopardizing their relationship with that person. Even Provost Tilden Edelstein conceded to the University Senate that in his experience at Rutgers University, graduate student unionization had not hindered these relationships.

**"If graduate-student employees unionize, won't the financial strain placed on the University cause the quality and reputation of graduate student education at SUNY to decline?"**

This sort of speculation is best addressed by looking at the experiences of other universities where graduate-student employees have organized. One would be hard pressed to argue that graduate programs at such nationally known and respected institutions as the University of Michigan, University of Wisconsin-Madison, University of California-Berkeley or Rutgers University (to name just a few) have been somehow decimated by their graduate-student employee unions. In fact, it seems that the improvements students have won for themselves at these schools make them more attractive to potential applicants, thereby elevating the overall quality and reputation of these programs. It is also important to recognize that by forcing the state to increase its financial commitment to graduate-student employees, doors of opportunity are opened to potential graduate students who might not otherwise have the economic safety net to make graduate school a viable option.

As far as the SUNY budget is concerned, the revenue that a union should gain for health care would not significantly impact the SUNY budget. Since SUNY Central has resisted unionization instead of supporting it, the state would most likely provide new contributions to SUNY's budget for new, state-negotiated line items like health care. SUNY's tight budget and resistance to unionization would be strong arguments for increased state funding. In addition, I do not believe that the union's membership would vote for a benefits package that would result in fewer stipend lines.

**"If we unionize, doesn't that mean that stipend levels will be equalized across the board without taking into account the cost of living differences from campus to campus?"**

While that hasn't been the case for SUNY faculty members, whose salaries vary based on the cost of living in their region of the state, the idea that SUNY graduate-student employees would choose to negotiate across-the-board

stipend levels is understandably a disconcerting one for students at Stony Brook. The fact of the matter, however, is that it would be inconceivable for the contract bargaining committee, with democratically elected members from Stony Brook, to negotiate such divisive and disempowering language into a contract. It also seems unlikely that the membership (particularly at Stony Brook, with the second largest graduate school in the system) would ratify such a contract if it were placed before them. Furthermore, safeguards could be, and probably will be, built into any contract ratification process the membership chooses to establish. Since virtually no member would want to see the concerns unique to his or her campus overlooked in a statewide contract, a constitutional requirement that a proposed contract be approved at each of the four university centers would seem likely.

**"Do we really need a union to win improvements for graduate-student employees?"**

In a strict sense, the answer to that question is certainly no. For many years, groups such as the GSO and SASU, as well as organizations of graduate students at the departmental level, have worked in the interest of graduate-student employees. Even after we build ourselves a union, these groups will continue to be the appropriate avenues to resolve some issues, and will be important allies working in coalition with the union on others. As most people who have been involved in these student organizations know all too well, however, their ability to affect lasting, concrete change is often limited. It is limited by our lack of power within SUNY and, frequently, by our inability to secure the victories they do win in a legally binding contract. It is not uncommon for administrators and other policy-makers to make promises to appease students, only to go back on them as soon as it is convenient. With a union, we not only create new avenues for input, but we strengthen the old ones.

**"Isn't this a bad time to unionize, since the state is in a budget crisis?"**

Precisely because of the budget crisis, it is more important now for graduate-student employees to organize themselves than ever before. At a time when the state and its agencies are going through their budgets with fine-toothed combs (and well-honed axes), do graduate-student employees really want to be among the only people on the New York State payroll without the protection of a union contract? Graduate students and the programs and services vital to them have been the victims of budget crises in the past, and will be targeted again in the future. A union contract is the surest way of protecting what we already

have, and perhaps the only way to make gains during tough economic times.

Stony Brook will survive the budget crisis. Only one-third of our university's budget comes from State funds, with most of the remainder coming from tuition and enrollment. Tuition has increased 60% this year and enrollment increased by five percent. It is our role as graduate-student employees that we must protect. Even though we provide the least expensive teaching services to the university, we are still the easiest to cut because we do not have a union contract to protect our lines.

When speculating on what priorities graduate-student employees, with the new-found strength of a legally recognized union, might choose to set for contract negotiations, there are a number of items that appear obvious. Probably the most obvious of these is a health-care benefit package. Is health care really a winnable issue? With a union, yes. Without a union, probably not. At other schools where graduate-student employees have unionized, health care benefits have traditionally been a top priority issue. Every graduate-student employee union contract currently in effect in this country (as far as this author is aware) includes health-care benefits. Generally speaking, graduate-student employees are among the only New York State employees with no real health-care benefits. Once again, that is because we are among the only employees who have not yet organized ourselves into a union. The State would certainly have a hard time convincing an arbitrator that it could afford to grant health-care benefits to all of its unionized employees except graduate students. On the other hand, graduate student organizations at SUNY's university centers have been working for health care benefits for many years. Without a union, there are still no signs of success on the horizon.

Another issue that graduate-student employees would seem likely to set as a high priority for contract negotiations would be protecting tuition waivers. SUNY has tried in the past to force full-line graduate-student employees to pay part of their tuition. It was a threat that was narrowly averted last year, and threatens to rear its ugly head again unless graduate-student employees legally secure their tuition waivers in a contract.

Other issues that are certain to arise, and remain for graduate-student employees themselves to prioritize for contract negotiations, include parking access and parking fees, expanded child-care benefits, stipend increases, and uniform grievance procedures. Regardless of what priorities graduate-student employees choose to set, one thing remains clear: With a union, graduate-student employees will have a real voice. A voice that will enable us to improve SUNY, for ourselves and for those who will follow us.

## Why We Don't Need A Union

By Thomas Pepper  
Graduate Student Advocate

I have already stated many of my objections to unionizing graduate students in a previous column in this paper; in this piece I will repeat some of these arguments, but I will focus on some practical reasons for not unionizing in the midst of a national recession and a Stony Brook budget crisis.

As I have argued before, the historical function of unions has been to organize the working class, who have their surplus labor extracted from them by capitalists as profit, and to get some of this back for them in the form of higher wages, shorter work days, and health benefits. In the case of graduate students, we are not producing profits; the money to increase our wages and give us health benefits must come from the taxpayers. During a recession, and especially given the anti-intellectual climate in the United States today, it is very unlikely that this will happen.

The Communications Workers of America (CWA, the union that the Graduate Student Employees Union has affiliated with) in particular has no experience in negotiating contracts for professionals, and we cannot expect

support in our contract demands from CWA's other unionized groups. CWA's primary interest in unionizing us is maintaining its membership level in order to maintain its extensive self-reproducing bureaucracy. Why aren't they out organizing the working class?

The answer is because professional groups are much easier and less expensive to organize, and they can collect the same money in dues from us they would from an organized industrial group. We are easier to organize because we tend to be much more liberal, more "to the left," than the working class. When we hear the word "union" we assume it means something progressive and good. But should we make this assumption? Moreover, are unions in our own best interest, regardless of whether they are good for the working class in the present phase of capitalism?

As professionals, we function to organize the relations between the global interests of capitalism and the collective working class; we produce students capable of producing the technology, of managing the businesses, and of producing the ideology that keeps late capitalism working. At least that's what the bourgeoisie would like. By union-

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# Political, Economic Climate Critical to Union Debate

By Fons Haffmans  
GSO Secretary

Unionization of graduate students in the SUNY system cannot be discussed in a vacuum and it is important to analyze the political and economic climate in which it is taking place. This is what I hope to do in the following paragraphs.

## US Economy [1]

The funding of higher education is a result of political decisions made at the federal and state level. These political decisions are in their turn determined by the economy of the United States. In this respect it is clear that the USA-- and in fact Western Europe as well-- has more or less been in a permanent economic crisis since the oil crisis of the 1970's. This crisis has led to a restructuring of the economy made possible by the advent of computer technology and facilitated by free trade agreements.

This has undercut the fundamental assumptions of the liberal (or, if you will, social-democratic or Christian--democratic) welfare state. The welfare state rests on the assumption that the government can raise its revenue by taxing its citizens in a continuously expanding economy. Due to the steady rise in the standard of living the tax pressure will not be seen as a burden, especially since tax revenue will be used to fund programs-- like higher education-- that all

## Why We Don't Need A Union--

(Continued from Page 7)

izing, we would be allaying their fears that what we are actually doing is questioning and undermining the hegemony of the ruling class. We would be proletarianizing our profession, forcing us into a position of selling technical skills for wages and job security.

On a more practical note, in the midst of this recession there is already going to be a reduction in the number of TA and GA lines. If the university is forced to pay health benefits and return our cost of living increases, there will be a further cut in lines by up to a third. In the English department, for example, there is already likely to be a reduction in the number of lines from about sixty to about forty or forty-five. Unionizing would most likely mean a further cut to between twenty-eight and thirty, with no reduction in the number of freshman students who need to take freshman composition. This will mean increased course loads and an eventual destruction of the national reputation of our program-- how will they recruit even the small number of students they can accept when they will have a course load which makes it impossible for them to finish their degrees?

We cannot afford to reduce access to public higher education for a short-term gain for a small number of people. Even if a union could get us everything the GSEU claims they can, which is doubtful, what good would it do if the graduate programs are so debilitated as a result that we cannot finish our degrees or get jobs? We should not allow a self-interested union bureaucracy to blind us to what is in the best interest of graduate students and graduate programs at Stony Brook.

citizens will profit from. This in turn rests on the assumption that the industrial base will expand, will remain competitive, and will be able to absorb most of the population as laborers in the production process.

Clearly the events of the 1970's and 1980's have shown that these assumptions are either too optimistic or even undesir-

able. Increased industrial growth has been linked to the worldwide destruction of the environment. The environmentalist movement has fundamentally questioned the desirability of economic growth. In the last ten years the old "blue-collar" industries, the backbone of the industrial base providing the best wages and benefits, has only

been able to remain competitive through continued downsizing. The jobs created in the service industry certainly don't come either with the wages or the benefits of the old blue collar jobs.

In addition the federal deficit, the Savings and Loan crisis, and the Bank crisis,  
(Continued on next page)

## Some Questions to Be Answered

By Jane Ely  
Department of Sociology

Before a vote to unionize takes place there are some questions that need to be addressed.

1. What is the "democratic" structure of the GSEU? Who are the officers and campus representatives? Are they current GA's and TA's? Who elected these people and who set up the union platform?

2. Where will the funds for pay increases and health insurance come from? Will they come from the SUNY budget and if so will this mean a loss of staff and junior faculty lines? Will it mean a loss of GA and TA lines?

3. What will the unionization of GA's and T's mean to the RA's? Will the number of RA's be cut in order to provide the same benefits GA's and TA's hope to gain? Will unionization further divide the GA's and TA's from the RA's?

4. How many GA's and TA's have to approve the union? What if Stony Brook doesn't want to unionize but Buffalo does? Will Stony Brook lose its grievance procedures for new ones and if so will they be

better than the procedures we have now?

5. If lines must be lost whose lines will be cut? Will minorities and women be protected by unionization or will a merit system be more firmly entrenched, putting women and minorities at more risk than they are now? How will foreign students be affected?

6. Will the GA's and T's be considered part-time or full-time employees? And how will this definition of employment affect the bargaining unit?

7. Why is GSEU/CWA the only union we can vote for? How many other graduate students has CWA represented? What will CWA gain from representing SUNY GA's and TA's?

8. How will GSEU get the RA's unionized? How will the RA's be able to vote for unionization and when?

9. Will the union bargain on a state-wide or a campus-by-campus basis? If one campus can give more money to its GA's and TA's from campus funds will unionization prohibit them from doing so?

10. Will current GA's and TA's do the

bargaining or will it be paid CWA employees? If other state unions are paying more for health insurance how much will GA's and TA's be expected to pay? How much will the dues be and who will control this money? How much money will CWA be paid? Where does CWA stand on political issues such as choice and affirmative action?

The GA's and TA's have won the right to unionize. This is as it should be. Now we have to be accountable for the choices we make. What we do will affect education and research for the entire State of New York. It will affect the access and quality of education for graduate and undergraduate students. Before we romanticize that we are the Wobblies incarnated, what are the political and economic realities that the State and the country face today? Are we the same workers as the "one big union" with the same social agenda? Will unionization mean that the GA's and TA's only want their pieces of silver no matter what happens in the future?

Ask the questions and then think hard about the answers.

## Unionization: A Platform Is Needed

By Jean Rousseau  
Department of Chemistry

A new delay will postpone the creation of a graduate student employees union. How long? It is not yet known. But one thing is sure: the principle of forming a union to defend common interests is gaining acceptance among graduate students. University President John Marburger's administration even encourages this movement by pushing a \$75 parking fee that will affect all students, but not the unionized faculty and employees of the university. The reason is simple. Their collective agreement prevents such fees.

The unionization debate has so far gravitated around potential gains such as health insurance. Beyond this issue, there have been only speculations on the exact role of a union, and how it would behave in the present financial context.

Graduate students in Chemistry have held two information meetings to address unionization questions. Jerry Raymond, the Graduate Student Employees Union (GSEU) organizer on campus, was invited to participate in the debate that ensued. The meeting was also open to faculty. Six of them, including the department chairman, Dr. David Hanson, came and participated. Two points emerged from the discussions.

First, the union will initially be representing only TA's and GA's. In the Chemistry department, they constitute 20% of all supported graduate students, while the majority are paid as RA's. Even though it has been said that an effort would be made

to include RA's within the new union once it is created, it is not clear how that can be done. A union formed by TA's and GA's will focus primarily on their concerns, which is normal. But it should be compatible with RA's interests.

Second, the structure of the future union is an empty shell at this point. All we know is that there will be a statewide union representing the different campus chapters, and that the union will be affiliated with the Communication Workers of America. Moreover, the schedule for the membership fees to the CWA seems to have already been established. In the absence of any proposed structure, it is not known if the fees would be paid to the state union directly and redistributed to the local chapters, or if it would be the opposite. Who would decide the issues? Will there be room to adjust for financial demands between campuses? Departments?

These are some of the many unanswered questions. In fact, graduate students in Chemistry are not willing to agree to form a union if a necessary platform containing the goals and the structure of this future union has not been elaborated by the time they are asked to sign membership cards.

The negotiating strength that carries an organized group is a well-recognized advantage, but in itself it is an insufficient reason to form a union. A consensus among student leaders on our campus must be reached to determine what a union is mostly needed for. Among the most urgent issues is the need to protect the number of gradu-

ate lines available. There are also large discrepancies in the income of graduate students in different departments. Should we do something about it or not?

It would be valuable to know what is happening on other campuses where there are already graduate student unions. Their examples could then be used to inspire a potential structure for our union. Some information has been gathered by the GSEU and will be available pretty soon.

The formation of a well-designed union will profit students and faculty as well. The necessary dialogue between the two groups will be more frequent and will certainly lead to a better understanding of the constraints faced by each other. This awareness can only enhance our status of student-workers.

Administrators fear the emergence of a new force on campus. They have good reasons; we will be a new variable in the equation of running a campus with many competing priorities. Yes, there is a financial crisis, but we don't have to be the main victims of so-called "undiscriminating" fees and cuts. A union will have to address these issues, in coordination with the Graduate Student Organization.

A strong union will only rise from a strong student movement. There is a lot of interest in unionization and it should not be wasted. It is an opportunity to stir up the energy of many students willing to contribute their time and ideas. Students from the arts, humanities, and sciences will first have to share their mutual concerns. Only then can we talk realistically of forming a union.



# Debate Must Include Political, Economic Climate—

created by the incompetence of the Republican administration, have severely curtailed the possibility of the federal government to pursue and fund public programs. The standard of living has decreased; the citizens are in debt through use of their credit cards to the banks; in short, the assumptions underlying the welfare state have been undercut. Simultaneously, the demand on state-sponsored services like welfare and Medicaid has increased, but the federal and state governments have been unable-- and unwilling-- to increase funding for those programs. In fact, New Jersey and Connecticut are both rocking with a "tax-revolt" after their governors decided to increase taxes and-- in the case of New Jersey-- institute a more equitable allocation of state school support. In other words the deepening economic recession has eroded the tax basis necessary to support public programs.

## New York State [2]

In this situation the GSEU as a representative of the TA/GA's steps into the bargaining process. Since GSEU is recognized as a state employees' bargaining unit, the benefits it negotiates for its members should be provided by the State. However, the GSEU has nothing to bargain with; it simply has a list of demands. Other unions have negotiated their benefits in better economic times and are now in a position to give some of them back to save jobs as the State troopers in Connecticut did.

However, it also appears that the State has not reserved the necessary funds to cover the benefits for all the employees in SUNY. New York State uses the size of the SUNY payroll at a particular point in time to determine how much money it needs to give SUNY to cover employee benefits.

Over the years the State has chosen the smaller payrolls to base its calculations on. When the payroll increases, SUNY has to cover benefits for the additional employees out of its own funds. The result is that SUNY has to use its funds to cover those benefits. Will the State require that the benefits of TA/GA's negotiated by GSEU come out of SUNY's budget? This might lead to a drastic decrease in TA/GA-lines.

What's the position of the Research Assistants (RA's) in this scheme? GSEU will formally only represent the GA/TA's. To make RA positions competitive with TA/GA-positions, the benefits GSEU negotiates for its members will have to be matched eventually for the RA's. Research grants will have to cover these benefits. Will this lead to more money from the research grant givers or will there be less money available for RA support?

## SUNY

Another factor in the equation is the plans top administrators in SUNY seem to have for graduate student support. The GSO executive council met with the Stony Brook administration over the summer to discuss the possible cuts in graduate student lines due to the budget reduction. I was left with the following impression: the number of TA/GA-lines will be decreased over the following years through attrition and awarding student support will become more competitive. Graduate students will be required to apply for national scholarships (NSF, NIH). Research assistantships would become the dominant means of graduate student support. Lastly, graduate students might be asked increasingly to fund a year at Stony Brook out of their own pockets. If Stony Brook is prestigious enough, students might be willing to do that.

It furthermore appears that the administration at Stony Brook is thinking about leveling off or even decreasing the research effort here. This would also mean fewer graduate student lines. In other words, access to graduate education has come under fire. In this sense GSEU finds itself in the difficult and dangerous position that it may well give administrators favoring the above scenario the excuse they are looking for to restrict access to graduate school. Furthermore, the administration is agreeable to increased benefits for GA/TA's as an incentive for the "ablest" graduate students. Increased competition for scarce resources in education invariably seems to favor the white upper-middle class segment of the population.

## GSEU

It is clear that unionization will affect every graduate student on this campus-- supported, unsupported, TA, GA or RA. It is then absolutely essential that GSEU has widespread support among the graduate students. But frankly, I don't know whether that's the case. Does the GSEU in Stony Brook have regular open meetings where graduate students are informed? Will those in Stony Brook willing to work for GSEU have a real say in GSEU policy? And how will that happen? Will they have their own budget? Who makes decisions in GSEU now? How are these decisions publicized? In short, what does it mean to be a member of GSEU? And since unionization will affect every graduate student, why doesn't GSEU seek the endorsement of the GSO Senate? I don't know the answers to these questions. I do think that the reader should try to find out the answers his/herself.

(Continued on Page 11)

# We Could Smash the State Without A Union—

(Continued from Page 6)  
our country.

However, the corruption of universities is not limited to scientific whoredom and corporate profiteering by greedy administrators. Campuses have also become the recruiting ground for unconstitutional government institutions such as the Central Intelligence Agency. This fact was highlighted quite recently (November 15th) when a special panel released its report on the relationship between the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) and the CIA. Among the panel's findings was the fact that the president of the college, M. Richard Rose, failed to disclose that he personally was working for the agency, despite CIA recommendations that he make his ties public. [7] Furthermore, as Gary Gustafson (an RIT student) points out, "The RIT administration has...negotiated an agreement allowing the CIA to manipulate RIT curriculum and influence faculty appointments and has established the Federal Program Training Center on campus which trains students to forge documents and is exclusively devoted to and funded by the CIA." [8]

## Let's Pretend We're "On the Waterfront"

In the face of all this -- and believe me, I have only scratched the surface -- here come our union organizers. What are Graduate Student Employee Union (GSEU) organizers proposing? What are they saying? What issues do they consider important? Let us examine some of the painful realities:

(1) GSEU president Dominic Chan states that "self-deter-

mination is our democratic right..." [9] This statement implies that our ability to act -- intellectually, politically, and morally -- is somehow dependent upon the will of the government. As I have already tried to make clear, nothing could be further from the truth. Students have the power to change society (against the will of the government) because they are voluntary participants in the reproduction of social order. Furthermore, I stand in agreement with Thomas Pepper (our Graduate Student Advocate) who has pointed out that "our ability to [produce knowledge, participate in an uncommon discourse, and possess cultural capital with symbolic value] is ultimately the source of the redistribution of social surplus value to public universities and the possibility of higher incomes for graduate students." [10] (2) GSEU organizers pay lip-service to students who do not receive any funding, claiming (in a 3x3 desktop publishing box) that "If some graduate students (TAs, GAs, etc.) become empowered, they will be in a much better position to help all graduate students." [11] Unfortunately, however, all fifteen of the GSEU Platform points are directed specifically to workplace issues.

(3) GSEU organizers completely ignore the political dimensions of the issues they are concerned with. What role do Republicans such as President Bush (the "education president") and Democrats such as Mario "the slasher" Cuomo play in salary cutbacks and cuts in financial aid? How can we effect political changes that can help to restore universities as communities of scholars?

(4) GSEU organizers have left completely unaddressed such vital issues as the militarization of research, corporate ties to university administrations, and campus recruiting by the CIA.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the unionization of graduate students, if it succeeds, will do two things which are highly dangerous. First, it will continue the process whereby intellectual work is commodified and thereby separated from its ultimate purpose. Second, unionization would bring students into a contractual arrangement with a blatantly criminal and unconstitutional government, and thereby indirectly legitimize its complicity in the suffering and deaths of millions around the globe as well as here at home.

I applaud the noble ideals which motivate the efforts of GSEU organizers. The need to organize students has never been greater, and I am sure that no matter what the

outcome, those efforts will result in greater coordination of students for positive purposes. My point is that we don't need any government's permission to act. By our very nature we are already empowered to do whatever we want to do. We can become brain-dead and march off to yuppiedom, or we can deny the reproduction of the prevailing social order. The choice is ours, no matter how hard we try to give it away.

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- [10] Thomas Pepper (1991). GSA Corner: Unions, Universities, and Power. *The GSO News and Blues*, Vol. 2, No. 3, page 7.
- [11] Staff (1991). Unionization is for all students! *The Graduate Student Employee Union Times*, Vol. 1, No. 1, page 4.

The next issue  
of the  
*News and Blues*  
Will be published on  
December 16—  
Look for it!

# Masters of Fine Arts Exhibit in Library Gallery

By Alison Hagge

Department of Art History

It's upon us: that point in the semester when chaos overcomes everyone. Those once-distant deadlines now loom over us as we find ourselves swimming in a sea of thoughts with little structure, little overall coherence. Give it another two weeks...

Much the same feeling presides at the Masters of Fine Arts (MFA) Group Show of first-year graduate students on exhibit (albeit, at sporadic times) at the library gallery until November 30. The confines of the limited gallery space is the major hindrance of the show's overall unity. Divergent themes and styles of the six artists represented are proffered too quickly in succession to comfortably be digested. But give yourself a moment in between pieces to cleanse the visual palette and you'll experience a thought-provoking collection of quality work.

**Karl F. Kneis's** vivid painting entitled *Crime and Punishment* seizes the eye, coaxes it along a visual rollercoaster created by the ribs of a variably-colored labyrinth of amorphous organic forms and then, abruptly, dumps it into deep, dark fissures of unknown and unfriendly origins. This fluid netherworld is unified by vibrant, prismatically aligned colors that compete with a blue-toned floodlight which blazes from a slight opening in the stark, architectural space above. We wait for a sign of life (or of death) to appear as a luminous shadow and eclipse the blaze: to appear and slowly, at first defiantly, then writhing with

resistance, slide into the depths of the bony stockade. Silence. And we realize *we* are already there.

Following counterclockwise is an untitled work by **Heejung Kim** which exudes the immediacy and fanciful randomness of a page torn from a sketchbook. The pastiche of human forms, of physical tension, is intertwined by fiery-hot molten delineations set against a cool-tone, swirling marble-like background. Energy radiates from these figures like a series of fireballs which sporadically burst forth and then in the excitement fizzle, cool, and blend into the recess.

Be sure not to miss **David Allen's** inauspiciously placed sculpted bronze *Fetishes* in the gallery's front window. During the Paleolithic Era, nomadic tribes crafted figurines that embodied the collective concerns of their people. The fetishes of their time-- the famed Venus figures-- presented enlarged genitalia symbolizing a respect for the crucial function of reproduction, hence survival of the human species.

Allen's curious and highly personal collection of hand-sized castings evoke a similar fetishistic urgency as he confronts motifs inherent in Western art. We recognize a mother and child. Her matronly arms blend with body, forming a protective cocoon around her emaciated child. Armless, but not disempowered, the child wiggles away from her embrace.

On the adjacent wall is Allen's monoprint over lithograph entitled *Deconstruction but...*, a visual "search for meaning" that pokes at



A mother and child sculpture from David Allen's *Fetishes*

the philosophical writings of Derrida.

**Gary Wojdyla's** untitled abstract landscape scene transfers us into a solitary, murky marshland, ominously devoid of fauna. From our vantage point, precariously positioned in the midst of the still water, we appropriate the stiff, lifeless quality of the neighboring mooring stakes. These isolated poles, naked of their wooden faculties, appear to have weathered some unknown force. A thick encaustic finish gives

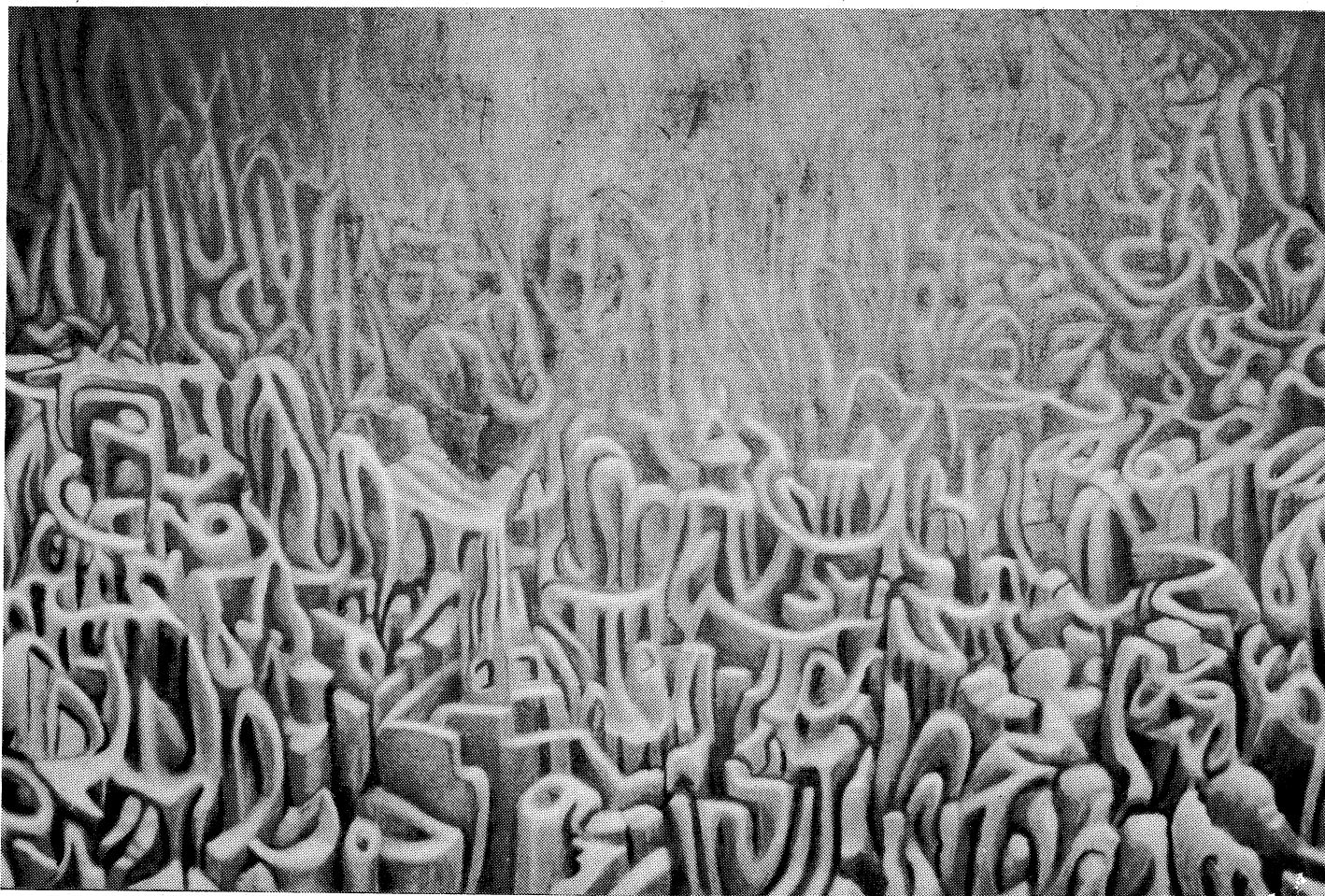
Wojdyla's piece lush depth and an all-encompassing eerie wetness.

On a more playful note, **Sally Kuzma's** two untitled pieces expose the quirky, anthropomorphic qualities of two canines, each caught in a candid, mid-moment action suggestive of Polaroid snap shots. The first hound appears to be returning home from a long, unrewarding day: his head hangs dejectedly and the long, chilling late-afternoon shadows encroach upon his spirit, as do the neatly clipped and uncomfortably looming suburban greenery beyond him. The second pup, however, is in his element: a forested, late-Autumn scene surrounds him. He appears to have been caught, in mid-stalk, by a noise as he perks his head with unquellable curiosity.

**Patricia Hubbard's** two pieces, although entitled *Route 25A* and *Saltmarsh*, seem to be less concerned with the thickly-painted landscape scenes and more with the issues of framing (i.e. where does the "artwork" stop and the frame begin? Are they in fact separate?). The landscape scenes are painted on paper the thickness of cardboard and then tacked onto an unstretched canvas mounted on a raised wooden block. The sterile, unstained canvas wraps around the wooden block, like sheets on a bed; the precise, hospital-corner folding perhaps tucking pictorial illusionism into bed.

The gallery is usually open from Noon to 4 PM. For more specific information, contact the Art History Department (632-7250).

Photos by Greg Forte



*Crime and Punishment*, by Karl F. Kneis



# GA, TA Payroll Transfer, Council Seat Reviewed by Senate

By Fons Haffmans  
GSO Secretary

The first business on the agenda of the November 13 senate meeting was the unanimous approval of the Senate minutes. The Senate then proceeded to listen to the officers' reports. During the Treasurer's report a motion from CED Senator Charles Jordan was brought to the floor, asking the auditor of the GSO finances to discuss his report with interested GSO members when he delivers it to the GSO

## Political, Economic Climate Crucial—

(Continued from Page 9)

There is another aspect about GSEU that needs more attention. GSEU is a statewide union. The Governor and SUNY indeed have a lot to say about policies affecting graduate students. However, the centralized structure of GSEU seems to under estimate the role the campuses play in graduate student policy which has become even more important lately. Part of a research grant (approximately 50%) is paid to SUNY for overhead costs-- called indirect cost-- that it incurs. Campuses are getting all their research-generated indirect cost funds back. This makes Stony Brook less dependent on State funds. Furthermore, there is talk of letting individual campuses manage-- but not negotiate-- the personnel benefits. This makes the question regarding the autonomy of local GSEU chapters even more pertinent.

### REFERENCES

[1] Ideas in this section are, among other sources, drawn from: Saskia Sassen, *The Mobility of Labor and Capital*, Cambridge [1989]; Bennet Harison and Barry Bluestone, *The Great U-Turn*, New York, [1988]; Anna Bramwell, *Ecology in the 20th Century*, New Haven [1989]; Alan Balfour, *Union-management Relations in a Changing Economy* [1987]; Fred Block et. al, *The Mean Season*, New York [1987].

[2] Sources for this paragraph: PERB decision regarding GSEU representation; GSEU constitution and affiliation agreement with CWA. Regarding graduate student funding: meeting with President Marburger dd. 6/20; meeting with A. King, 8/91. Regarding the funding of benefits: President Marburger's response to questions of the executive council presented at the GSO Senate 11/21; meeting with A. King, dd. 11/13. King voices his skepticism in this issue too.

executive council. This motion was voted down, giving at least this writer the impression that the Senate didn't want the members to scrutinize the GSO books. It was resolved that the accountant's presence will be widely publicized so that members can be present at the executive council meeting when he presents his report.

The Senate then proceeded to discuss the GA/TA-payroll transfer to the Research Foundation. State Comptroller Ned Regan refused to sign the contract because the Research Foundation would be managing a State employees' payroll and this would usurp his powers to audit state agencies. The Research Foundation is a not-for-profit corporation and not a state agency. Transferring the payroll back to the State would almost certainly mean that TA/GA's would be subjected to a pay lag. However, there appeared to be some relief. Some TA/GA's are being paid out of the so-called Indirect Cost (IDC) funds managed by the Research Foundation. Those GA/TA's might not have to switch back to the State payroll, exempting them from the pay lag. A great deal still remained unclear and the Senate unanimously adopted a letter drafted by Graduate Student Advocate Tom Pepper, requesting the administration to inform the graduate student body fully of this matter before December 2.

The Senate then discussed a motion brought to the floor

by Charles Jordan regarding the Stony Brook Council elections. According to his proposal, the undergraduate and graduate student body would both vote each year for the candidates for this seat. The current arrangement is that the undergraduate and graduate student body vote for a candidate from their ranks on alternate years. The new proposal was criticized on the grounds that many more undergraduates voted than graduates, making it unlikely that a graduate student would be elected to the Stony Brook council in a campus-wide election.

Jordan responded that since the student seat on the Stony Brook Council represents all students, he or she should be elected in at-large elections even though they may be nominated by either the graduate or undergraduate students in alternate years. Furthermore, since the medical students aren't members of the GSO, but the GSO does organize the Stony Brook Council elections, a significant part of the voting public is disenfranchised. The matter was referred to the election committee. Subsequently Katherine Kent, senator the AMS department, was endorsed as representative on the Stony Brook Council. She replaces David Senator, who had been elected in the Spring semester but has since left Stony Brook.

The next meeting of the GSO Senate will be on Wednesday, December 4 at 7:30 PM in Room 201, Central Hall.

### GSA Corner

## When You Say That Ms.(ter), Smile; Or, What It Means To Be P.C.

By Thomas Pepper  
Graduate Student Advocate

Sometimes it is hard to determine exactly what is at stake in even the most heated academic battles, but the extent to which debates over political correctness have extended into the popular press and even into popular culture require that we make an effort to make this determination. Most of the attacks on political correctness have come from the political right and have been framed in terms of a defense of free speech and intellectual freedom. The ideology of political correctness so frequently reproduced by liberal-oriented television has usually accepted these terms; but is this the best strategy? The problems presented by producing the ideology of political correctness in this way are exemplified by a recent episode of one of the most popular apologies for capitalism on television today, *Star Trek: The Next Generation*.

In this episode, entitled "Silicon Avatar," a thing called the "crystalline entity" descends on a newly colonized planet, destroying all life there. After hunting it down, Captain Picard decides not to destroy it but to attempt to communicate with it, exclaiming "It has as much right to be here as we do!" By means of computer-generated sound waves, he hopes to produce a field of objective and undistorted communication, which will somehow convince the entity to give up its sole source of energy, the destruction of life forms. Picard is able to stop the entity from consuming a planet by attracting it with these sound waves, and to halt its action while communication is attempted. His attempts are destroyed when a scientist seeking revenge on the entity uses the very means of communication with it to produce a sound that shatters the silicon crystal.

One of the interesting things about this show is that it generally exposes the limit of its official ideology, which is in this case Picard's ideology of the power of rational communication. What the destruction of the entity illustrates is that even communication can have material effects. Picard's all encompassing political correctness places non-discrimination in the realm of free and undistorted communication. Accepting this popular ideology is clearly dangerous; its dangers are most clearly stated by the enlightenment philosopher Emmanuel Kant: "Reason about anything you want, and as often as you

want... but obey!" The belief that the university is a place where all material effects of ideas and speech should be set aside while we reason and speak freely is naive and dangerous. Like the crystalline entity, all discriminatory practices are to be left in existence while this attempt at undistorted communication is made. We are expected to reason about the discriminatory practices of the military, for example, while obeying the social law, even though we know it is arbitrary and morally offensive.

There has never been such a thing as universal free speech in America; a federal court in Texas recently decided that when free speech comes in conflict with the right of private property, specifically with the ability to make a profit from private property, the right of private property takes precedence. Even in the courts, free speech is only free as long as it has no material effects. We can say anything we want as long as we say it with a smile, as long as we don't really mean it. Political correctness must be understood to be a recognition that no speech is free of material effects. Even Picard's objective communication has the effect of holding the enterprise and the entity in a stalemate, preventing the one from seeking out new worlds and new civilizations and the other from renewing its energy supplies.

When the military recruits on campus, it is not merely engaging in a free dissemination of information. It is reproducing the cultural myths that homosexuals cannot be trusted, and the cultural construction of sexual difference in which every man sexually desires every woman and (although to a lesser extent, one recruiter on campus told me last week) every woman desires every man. Homosexuals destroy this binary, threaten definitions of masculinity and femininity, and are perverse and dangerous. This is not free speech in the sense of speech free on consequences. The consequences are frightening; the military should not have as much right to be here as anyone.

The academic debate over political correctness is threatening to the political right because there is so much at stake. What is at stake is the ability of every group to define itself, because these definitions have material effects. We need to recognize these stakes, and avoid the trap that popular ideology of political correctness has set for us. What it means to be P.C. is that we recognize that teaching and knowledge are never objective.

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# Short Takes

## And Last Licks.....

### Graduate Students in the News:

Compiled by University News Services

**Magdalena Chocano**, a graduate student in the Department of History and a native of Lima, Peru, was awarded a research fellowship by Brown University to study at the John Carter Brown Library, a center for advanced research in the humanities. She is one of 17 scholars from around the world to receive the honor for the 1991-92 academic year. Chocano will study "Intellectual Dissent and Compliance in the Political Culture of 17th Century New Spain."

**Ron Kellen**, a graduate student in the Department of Art (and contributor to *The GSO Survival Guide*), recently had his artwork included in the Hudson River Watercolor Exhibition at Woodstock, New York. Work by Kellen will also be on display at the Gallery North "Holiday Show" through December 31. Gallery North is located at 90 North Country Road. Call 751-2676 for more information.

**Kent Marks**, a graduate music student, has been awarded the 1991 Brian M. Israel Prize by the Society for New Music for his composition "Dies Irae Variations." The work is scored for flute, string bass, and percussion, and is scheduled for performance in the society's 1991-92 series.

**Oded Zehavi**, a doctoral candidate in the Music Department, received glowing reviews for the performance of his composition "Requiem," which took place at the Noga Theatre in Jaffa, Israel last month. *The Jerusalem Post* referred to its "stunning depth of expression and feeling" and "fascinating music which expresses a wide range of human experience: drama, passion, compassion, dolefulness and, in the final movement, beautiful peace and tranquility... a gripping, immensely powerful and deeply moving work. It is universal." Zehavi, whose permanent home is in Israel, lives in Setauket.

**Mary Robinson**, a graduate student in Mathematics, was awarded the Renate W. Chasman Scholarship for Women by the Brookhaven National Laboratory's Women in Science. The scholarship was created to encourage Long Island women to resume formal education in scientific and technical fields. Robinson enrolled at Stony Brook in 1990, 15 years after completing her bachelor's degree at SUNY Binghamton. Robinson expects to receive her master's degree in 1992.

**Brian Uzzi**, a graduate student in Sociology, has won the James D. Thompson Award for the best graduate research paper on the topic of organizational theory. The \$500 award was presented to Uzzi at the recent American Sociological Association meet for his paper titled "Interorganizational Relations and Network Effects: A Structural Embeddedness Approach to Deindustrialization and Organizational Decline."

**Michael Lowenstern**, a graduate student in the Music Department, was recently awarded second prize in the 1991 International Gaudeamus Interpreters Competition. His performance was on bass clarinet. Forty-eight soloists and ensembles from 14 countries participated in the competition.

**Attention:** If you have a contribution for this section (and yes, you can submit information about yourself-- we don't mind people having egos), please type/write it up in a short paragraph and send/deliver it to GSO, Room 206 Central Hall, (campus zip) 2710. Information can also be sent via All-in-1 to the "GSO" account.. Contact George at 632-6492 if you have any questions.

### Arts Open House To Be Held December 8

Graduate students from the Theatre Arts and Art Department, along with the International Art of Jazz, will host an open house on Sunday, December 8 beginning at 4 PM in Nassau Hall on South Campus. Painting, prints, photography, and sculpture by MFA students will be exhibited. Many of the artists will be on hand, and art work will be for sale.

An original one-act play dramatizing the Sumerian myth, "Inanna, Queen of Heaven and Earth" will be presented by Theatre Arts students at 7 PM.

Throughout the afternoon, professional jazz musicians who work with the International Art of Jazz will perform. The IAJ, the oldest nonprofit jazz organization in the country, is in Nassau Hall.

The event is free and open to the public. Refreshments will be served.

### Chamber Music Series Set to Begin December 2

The Staller Center will present a series of four December chamber music concerts performed by graduate students in the Department of Music. The dates are Monday, December 2, Wednesday, December 4, Tuesday, December 10, and Thursday, December 12. All concerts begin at 8 PM.

Among the musicians are a trio composed of Ellen Jewett, violin; Carl Donakowski, cello; and Dena Levine, piano. Other performers include Douw Fonda, cello; Lisa DeLuca, violin; Becky Kruger, violin; and Kurt Rohde, viola. All concerts are free, although donations are welcome.

### The Unclean Being Performed December 5-8 At Staller Center

*The Unclean*, an experimental play directed by John Lutterbie, will be performed in Theater II of the Staller Center on Thursday, December 5, Friday December 6, and Saturday, December 7 at 8 PM and Sunday, December 8 at 2 PM. Tickets are \$6 for students.

The play, a collaborative work between Lutterbie (an assistant professor in the Theatre Department) and the students who perform in it, "is an investigation of prejudice and the importance of breaking the silence, of telling our stories as a means of countering the violence of hate," Lutterbie says. Original music, childhood games, reminiscences, and clown skits weave this unique work together. Tickets can be purchased at the Staller Center Box office (632-7230).

**Last licks:** What a party....



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