



PCT PLEDGE

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TRYING TIMES

By PCT President Morty Rosenfeld

The world of public education grows more depressing by the day. Locally, I don't recall a time when our district languished as it does now. While we trip over ourselves collecting data and making believe the education of children is a science, while we add program after program in our mad race to out test-prep the other districts in the county, teachers talk about feeling more and more marginalized - caught in a system that seeks to depress their skills in favor of mass-manufactured, mass marketed instruction. We search for the magical program that will end education - just plug the kids into it, and they will know everything that they have to know, effortlessly. I still can't quite believe it, but I attended several Board of Education meetings where review books for AP tests were being seriously discussed without anyone appreciating the inherent irony.

More depressing still was the response of the Superintendent of Schools to a question from a member of the public who wanted to know what the District's plan is for providing elementary services in that the budget for next year will cause two of the clericals to be fired. "We haven't developed a plan yet," was his reply, thereby speaking what all PCT members suspected - HE DOESN'T CARE ABOUT US.

At the state level, Democrats and Republicans in the Senate thumb their noses at us by supporting the lame duck governor's education budget slashing proposals. The Assembly looks heroic for having the temerity to talk about replacing about half of what the governor proposes to cut. While that's going on, the right wing blames NYSUT for the failure of New York's Race to the Top application, while the Regents prepare to impose the Obama model of tying teacher evaluations to student progress. Remembering the kid I was, I'd be organizing the students in my class to threaten to fail the state tests if my teacher didn't commit to high report card grades.

Nationally, a Democratic administration that organized public education and moved mountains to elect has quite simply turned its

back on us, its indifference for us so profound that the President himself gets quoted as supporting the mass firing of entire faculties in schools that consistently under perform. To date, our national unions have been tepid in their response, worried lest coming out strongly against Obama and Duncan will cause them to lose their seat at the table. What the value of that seat is, no one seems to bother to calculate.

These are trying times indeed. Yet, the answer to our problems lies in our history. 50 years ago, the country was united against allowing us to bargain collectively. Our wages were abysmally low, and the working conditions whatever the bosses said they were. In Plainview and elsewhere, a brave bunch of teachers decided to stand up and demand better treatment - DIGNITY & STATUS read the little blue buttons the Plainview unionists wore.

They withstood the threats of their bosses, the insults of the public and often the vitriol of some of their own colleagues to who union was a derogatory term. They even broke unjust laws. They didn't beg for a seat at the table. They demanded it! It's time for our membership across the country to follow in their footsteps.

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

April 10, 2011 will mark the 50th anniversary of the chartering of the PCT as a local affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers. To help us develop a plan to appropriately commemorate the founding of our union, the officers of the PCT have recruited a group of retirees and Executive Board members. The committee will begin its work shortly and have a plan to recommend to the Executive Board in September.

Members who would like to contribute ideas for how we might celebrate 50 years of serving the needs of our membership should send them to a special email address set up for this purpose - pct50th@pobct.org.

55/25 LAW PASSED

On April 14, Governor Paterson signed into law a 55/25 retirement incentive bill. This law will allow retirement system 3 and 4 members who are at least 55 years of age and who have 25 years of experience to retire with out the usual penalty for under 30 years of credited service, penalties which are quite substantial. It is important to note, however, that while the new law frees retirees from these penalties, **it does not give them 5 additional years of service.** A person retiring with 25 years of credited

service will receive a pension based on 25 years of service. The new law does not require any action by our Board of Education. The Board does not as in previous state incentives have the right to opt in or out of participation.

PCT members are reminded of the May 15th deadline in our contract with the District that obligates those retiring to submit an irrevocable letter of resignation by that date in order to guarantee payment for accumulated sick leave in the first payroll in July. Failure to meet this deadline, entitles the Board to withhold payment for accumulated sick leave until the following July.

Members requiring assistance with matters relating to the decision to retire are asked to call PCT President Morty Rosenfeld for assistance.

BUDGET BOARD VOTE PREPARATIONS UNDERWAY

On May 18, 2010, voters throughout New York state will be voting on their local school budgets and for candidates for the local board of education.

In Plainview the proposed budget calls for a budget to budget increase of 2.9%, one of the lowest increases historically. The proposed budget breaks no new ground, although it makes cuts that will have more of an impact than may be expected.

Nominating petitions for the three seats on the Board of Education up for election are due on Monday, April 19, 2010. The three seats are those currently held by Board President Lori Weinstein, Vice-President Gary Bettan and Angel Cepeda.

The PCT Executive Board will be taking a position on the budget and board election at their meeting on May 13.

In the meantime, SRC Reps will be talking to the members in their buildings beginning the process of recruiting volunteers for the PCT phone bank that will begin operation on Saturday, May 15 and continue through Monday May 17.

Members are reminded that this is one of our union's activities that requires the participation of everyone. It's not a job that can be left to officers and SRC Reps.

Don't wait to be asked. Volunteer to your SRC Reps today.

CONTRACT COMMITTEE APPROVED

In response to an interest expressed by some of our members, the PCT Executive Board approved the formation of a Contract Committee charged with the responsibility of researching other education contracts for things

that might be of interest to our members. The goal is to have this committee make recommendations to the Negotiating Committee for submission to the membership for approval.

Members interested in serving on this committee should contact the PCT Office.

GRIEVANCE REPORT

PCT Grievance Chair Judi Alexanderson reported to the Executive Board that she has filed a grievance on behalf of members of the Clerical Unit of the union who were charged for two vacation days when school was closed due to snow. Alexanderson also reported that the decision to take these days from them was made by the Board of Education.

As of this writing, this case has been filed at Levels I and II and has to be argued before Assistant Superintendent Arthur Jonas who was appointed by the Superintendent to hear the grievance.

Since the Board was clearly involved in the decision to take these days from the clericals, there is every expectation that the Grievance will be denied at Level II. Should that happen, the PCT will file with the American Arbitration Association (AAA) for arbitration. The AAA will facilitate finding a neutral person to settle our dispute on this issue.

After Alexanderson's report to the Executive Board, PCT President Morty Rosenfeld said in answer to a question, "The crazy thing about this is that both sides are now going to pay thousands of dollars over two vacation days."

ARE YOU A PCT

FACEBOOK FAN?

A PCT TWITTER FOLLOWER?

Attempting to have an as up-to-date communications program as possible, the PCT has for the past few months maintained a presence on Facebook and Twitter in addition to its presence on the web at pobct.org. While we know for sure that visits to these social networking sites is increasing monthly, there hasn't been very much interaction on our Facebook page. Come take a look. Write something on our wall!