



## **PCT PLEDGE**

**Plainview-Old Bethpage**

**Congress of Teachers**

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## **THE YEAR THAT WAS**

**By PCT President Morty Rosenfeld**

Is there one among us who isn't glad this school year is over?

It was a year in which the media searched for a culprit to blame for the depressed economy and resulting staggering unemployment and discovered public employees. What good targets we are.

In a nation with only the most meager social safety net, we are depicted as unaccountable, union insulated, benefit laden parasites on the body politic. Defined benefit pensions that allow people an old age with dignity are attacked by those who don't have them themselves. Just this morning, on public radio, there was some putative economics guru warning the public of the looming disaster to come from retirees of state and local government who carry their health insurance benefits into retirement. Instead of raising the consciousness of Americans to expect all people to have decent pensions and health benefits as most of the industrialized democracies do, we are bombarded by corporate culture even on 'public radio' to believe that such things are economically unsound and a rip-off by "the unions," as though groups of people coming together to improve their economic lot were the equivalent of organized crime of some sort.

Probably no group of public employees has taken more hits this year than public school employees. From the President of the United States to the bloggers on *A Very Plainview*, the lie that we are unaccountable, over-paid and rapacious in our demands on the public purse while defied by our experience is galling nevertheless.

We haven't seen much from our state and national unions to be proud of either. We've seen too many in our union movement try to mollify these voices of ignorance by shamelessly engaging in agreements to use student test results to evaluate teachers, to modify tenure laws to make it easier to fire teachers. We haven't seen anyone firmly stand up to President Obama, telling him in no uncertain terms that his prescription for the

nations schools is worse than that of his predecessor. We won't either, I suspect. Our leaders are fearful that to do so would lose us a seat at the table.

Locally, when we demanded to have raises that would prevent us from falling behind districts the public likes to compare us to, we were met by a board of education that took the negotiations public hoping to turn the public against us with some success. Our negotiations were made more difficult by too many local unions that made concessions and gave back hard-won salary raises and benefits, not recognizing that in so doing they only whet the appetite of the public for more to say nothing of making it more difficult for others like us to resist.

Yet through it all, we managed to get a fair contract, avoid large numbers of layoffs and taught the kids, albeit sometimes under very difficult circumstance.

I wish I could tell you the immediate future looks brighter. If I did, you would know I'm lying. The battles will undoubtedly continue, but so too will the solidarity that got us through this year unscathed.

I wish you all a wonderful summer.

## **ATTENTION RETIREES**

### **403B WORKSHOP**

As this edition of the *Pledge* goes to press, the Board of Education has not made a decision whether or not to adopt the recently enacted legislative retirement incentive. Yet, there may be people who will retire this June even if the Board does not choose to take the incentive. Those people need to act to see to it that their sick leave pay-out is sheltered in the non-elective 403b provided for in the contract between the District and the PCT.

Those people will need to attend a 403b workshop that will be held in the PCT Office on Wednesday, June 23, 2010 at 4:00 P.M. At this time, retiring members will be assisted in filling out the necessary paperwork to shelter their sick leave money. The meeting should take approximately one half hour.

## **50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY**

A PCT committee of both active and retired members is busy at work putting together a program of activities for next school year's celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the PCT.

The goal of the planning committee is to provide opportunities for members to learn of the rich history of our union and its place in the teacher labor movement and to

provide celebratory opportunities as well.

To help the committee with its work, members who have photographs or other memorabilia of events in our union's history are asked to be in touch with the PCT Office to arrange for those materials to be copied. Thinking about the 50<sup>th</sup> celebration has stimulated us to begin to put together a comprehensive digital archive of historical documents and photographs.

We know that many of our members have pictures and materials that would be valued parts of our collection. Recently, Ruth Berger, the wife of PCT President Jerry Berger, leader during the strike that led to the recognition of the PCT as the bargaining agent for the teachers in Plainview-Old Bethpage lent us a scrapbook that Jerry kept of those ground-breaking days which we were able to copy and which will be available shortly on our webpage.

The planning committee will be meeting over the summer and hopes to have a schedule of events ready for the start of the new school year.

### **APPR CHANGES**

By now PCT members and the public in general are familiar with the changes enacted by the New York State legislature changing the way in which teachers in our state are evaluated. Hailed by NYSUT leadership as an advancement of the teaching profession and as teachers contributing to defining excellence, the settlement between our state union and the state education department that is memorialized in the law sets out a process that includes using state and local measures of student performance for forty percent of a teacher's annual professional performance review (APPR).

Whether the changes in the way teachers are evaluated is as NYSUT leadership maintains a step forward, or as PCT President Morty Rosenfeld has argued a cynical capitulation to the forces bent on destroying public education, the fact is that any successor contract that we negotiate next year is going to have to include significant features of the new APPR that must be negotiated locally, things like local measures of student growth, and an appeals process to challenge evaluations.

The officers of the PCT wanting to avoid to the extent possible APPR negotiations complicating what if the experience of the recent past is any indicator will be difficult economic negotiations, has agreed with the Superintendent of Schools to begin to talk about APPR as soon as possible, perhaps an initial meeting before the end of the school year.

To prepare for those discussions, the PCT has been collecting APPRs from throughout the state hoping to glean ideas for what we might incorporate in our document. PCT members can expect to hear much more about this subject during the next school year.

## **BERKOWITZ & RUBIN**

### **SCHOLARS NAMED**

Each year the PCT awards twelve thousand dollars (\$12,000) in scholarships to graduating seniors of our high school at the annual awards assembly.

This year two five thousand dollar (\$5000) Leonard and Miriam Berkowitz Scholarships were awarded to seniors Ghazal Erfani and Alyssa Reimer. This scholarship is given on the basis of outstanding academic achievement. The Trustees of the scholarship fund were blown away by the breadth of their academic interests. Ms. Erfani will be attending Cooper Union next year, Ms. Reimer is off to Harvard.

This year's two thousand dollar Paul Rubin Memorial Scholarship was awarded to Jenna Stern. The Rubin scholarship is awarded to a student who shows promise of living a life of commitment to the welfare of others. Ms. Stern has been working to improve the lot of others since she was a little child who decided to share her birthday presents with children less fortunate than she. She will be attending Parsons School of Design of the New School in the fall.

### **SUMMER HOURS**

During the months of July and August, the PCT and Welfare Fund Office will be open on Monday through Thursday between the hours of 9:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M.

### **FOR RENT**

One bedroom apartment available for rent in Farmingdale. Single person preferred. No smokers or pets. Brand new. Separate entrance, own thermostat and air conditioning. All utilities included. Available mid August. Call (516) 454-6813.

### **FOR SALE**

4 Bedroom Colonial in Plainview. In-ground pool, cul-de-sac. Call (516) 581-6653.

### **CREDITS FOR SALE**

Adelphi credits. Contact Ilana Mosayov at (516) 984-3813.

1.5 C.W. Post credits. Contact Stacey Ortenberg at (631) 974-0674.