

NEWSLETTER

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Weld Singles Out Higher Education, Again

In a letter dated February 11, 1991, to Chancellor Randolph W. Bromery, Governor William F. Weld wrote, "I am writing to inform you that I cannot recommend to the general court that it appropriate the monies requested to pay the incremental costs contained in the sixteen Higher Education collective bargaining agreements submitted to Governor Dukakis on December 27, 1990. In light of the extraordinarily difficult fiscal circumstances now facing the Commonwealth, for both the current fiscal year and the ensuing one, and in light of other significant cost items for existing employee benefits which the Administration cannot support and which would be continued under the recently signed agreements, I do not believe that the incremental cost items in these agreements can be funded. I therefore refer the request back to the parties for further bargaining."

Though Governor Weld has recommended that the contracts not be funded, he submitted agreements from the Alliance, NAGE, and MOSES. All unions expect to be receiving calls soon ordering them back to the table to bargain the money and benefit items in their contracts.

The MCCC has also filed a demand to bargain over the impact of the unilateral implementation of the one-college concept and the transfer of day bargaining unit work to DCE.

Higher Ed Leaders Set Their Agenda

On Friday, February 15, 1991, at the Best Western Hotel in Marlborough, representatives from the 28 public colleges and universities met to discuss the many proposals which have been put forth concerning changes in public higher education, and to come to a consensus on as many items as possible. This conference was designed to outline those issues and to provide the MTA lobbyists with a unified opinion from higher education. After listening to legislators from House Ways and Means, Education, and Public Service Committees, approximately 70 people broke into groups to discuss four topics—structure; finance and student access; tax policy; and collective bargaining—with the primary objective of creating a unified public higher education policy agenda.

What has become apparent in the past two weeks is the lack of uniformity of opinion concerning higher education and the scarcity of people or groups speaking out on behalf of a quality public higher education system in Massachusetts. There are a myriad of questions (and as many opinions) of how higher education should be structured: should all tuitions go back to the campuses; should scholarships be turned into loans; should the regents (a lay board) be eliminated; should the local boards have more power; should the state colleges be blended with the university system with satellite campuses; should there be an Education Secretariat; should there be regionalization of certain campus functions; should there be geographic access to public higher education and so on. And, these preceding issues do not even address the obvious and immediate concerns of the employees: furloughs; increased health insurance costs; funding of pending contract; termination of employee/family tuition waiver; repeal of "anti-rollback" law; and mandatory use of spousal health insurance. The process of working on a consensus was further

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complicated by the legislators having told us that as items were rejected, we should suggest other methods of raising revenues.

The leadership from the colleges and universities agreed on the following which were forwarded to all legislators in a memo from MTA President Rosanne Bacon, Executive Director Edward Sullivan, and Director of Governmental Services Arline Isaacson on February 19, 1991.

Support the sales tax on services.**Oppose delay of \$134 million in pension contributions****Proposals Immediately Affecting Education.**

- **Collective Bargaining Issues:** Any proposed changes by the Weld Administration in wages, benefits, or working conditions must be addressed through collective bargaining, not through the legislative process. Contracts are in effect which prescribe those issues, and they must be honored. Public higher education employees do not wish to subsidize public higher education or balance the budget by taking a succession of pay and benefit cutbacks.

- **Funding for our pending contracts.** Public higher education members have not had a raise since 1988. Governor Weld has refused to submit our contracts to the legislature for funding thereby singling out higher education employees for salary and benefit rollbacks.

- **Ten-Day Furloughs.** A two-week pay loss to bail out the state is outrageously unfair. It is a special tax on state employees representing 3-4 percent pay cuts. The collective bargaining contracts which contain the pay an employee is to receive should be honored and not shattered by a law designed to blow them apart or violate our state constitution.

- **Repeal of Anti-Rollback Legislation and Higher Health Insurance Premiums.** The anti-rollback law contains legal rights which require employers and employees to negotiate over certain changes involving health care benefits. Repeal of this law erodes basic labor law rights and should not be legislated away. Repeal of this law is the first step in the escalation of insurance increases which, in time, will more than erode any salary increases which may be received. A cost shifting of health care premiums to public employees by the legislature is another, unfair tax. The higher education members believe the proposed "cafeteria plan" should be further analyzed, and then bargained collectively (Proposed increase is 150% of present premium of \$70/month would cost \$175/month.).

- **Loss of Tuition Waiver.** Another benefit also gained at the bargaining table, members oppose efforts to repeal this benefit. Extending tuition waivers to employees of institutions of higher education is a common practice and benefit in other states as well as in private institutions in Massachusetts. It is a violation of our contract to unilaterally remove this benefit, and accordingly, a constitutional violation to negate our contract by passing a law.

- **Reorganization of Education.** Rather than an education Secretariat, the higher education members would propose a substantially changed Board of Regents with expanded roles and responsibilities. It is important to retain a lay board which would minimize political interference. The board should also be representative of public higher education by including among its members an individual from each segment. Making local boards of trustees stronger would increase local political interference and would move us from a higher education system to individual colleges taking care of themselves without regard to the survival of the system.

• **Increased Tuitions.** Current tuitions and mandatory academic fees (which have risen 50% and 90% respectively in the past three years) now account for virtually one-third of the cost of education. The Weld Administration's proposal would increase total tuition and fees to over 40% of cost. The state's commitment to public education must be bolstered if our colleges and universities are to remain accessible and truly public.

• **Tuition Retention.** Unfortunately, our worst fears have been realized—our budgets have been reduced by the tuition retention monies. Understanding that tuition retention is here to stay, the higher education members oppose the further expansion of tuition retention since it will continue to be the conduit for the state to take a walk on its support of public higher education. Grandfather current tuition retention levels and restore the state's support of two years ago.

Call your legislators

• **Converting State Scholarships to Loans.** Reverse the percentage from 30% public 70% private to 70% public and 30% private; retain scholarships for students who attend public institutions; convert the 30% to repayable loans for students attending private institutions. The Commonwealth's open attempt to move students from the public institutions to the private institutions with state scholarship monies defeats, again, the purpose of public higher education.

Everyone should be on the telephone with their legislators and insisting that the legislature stay away from collective bargaining issues. Benefits bargained across the table should be discussed across the table. The legislature cannot be allowed to pass legislation which takes away what we have gained through bargaining. It is the responsibility of all unit members to pick up the phone. The more resistance we make, the better chance we have of stopping these incidious changes. Higher education is going to change; we need to have an impact on these changes.

While members make their calls, they should also be thinking about exactly what they are willing to do if our legislature supports the Weld Administration proposals. For a unit member making \$40,000, the giveback could go as high \$4,000 with our contract funding nowhere in sight. Ask your representatives how they can support such draconian takebacks. Tell your legislators how these cuts affect you in very specific examples. Increase your monthly insurance deduction by 150%; divide your annual salary by 160 and multiply by 10 (could even be 15 days); and if you get sick and the anti-rollback legislation gets repealed, add at least \$1,000 for increased copayments and deductions. And don't forget to calculate into these figures inflation since 1988.

DCE Implementation Erratic

The implementation of the DCE contract has been progressing smoothly on some campuses but with difficulty on others. Thirty-eight grievances have been filed with four favorable resolutions. Outstanding grievances which have implications for many faculty members include: the right of a unit member to be offered a course in each work area where he or she has seniority; the significance of seniority in the assignment of courses; the obligation of DCE to solicit teaching preferences as it had in the past; and the eligibility of administrators to teach in DCE and their obligation to pay dues if they are eligible to teach.

The rights and fair treatment of unit members are being vigorously pursued by the MCCC and the DCE Coordinator Joe Rizzo. Unfortunately a pattern is emerging at certain colleges in that the administration is making teaching under a collective bargaining agreement as unpleasant as possible. For instance, where being assigned several courses in the past was commonplace, the administration has gone to the extreme and will assign only one course. This demoralizes the faculty and the antagonism is needless and a waste of everyone's energies. The MCCC hopes to convince these uncooperative administrators that these policies are seemingly vindictive and unproductive.

If anyone has any questions, they should contact Joe Rizzo at (603) 893-6806.

Nota Bene

- New Spring, 1991 DCE employees should be receiving a copy of the Collective Bargaining Agreement and other information as soon as their names are sent to the MCCC Treasurer. If you have not received your contract or need additional information, you should contact Tom Parsons, MCCC Treasurer, (617) 235-3606.

- A motion which passed the MCCC Delegate Assembly in 1989 stated that the MCCC must provide day care facilities for the delegates' children. If anyone attending the MCCC Delegate Assembly on Saturday, April 20, 1991, at Mt. Wachusett Community College will need day care, he or she must notify the MCCC Treasurer **Tom Parsons no later than April 1, 1991.**

- Nomination papers for the MTA Annual Meeting in Boston on May 10-11, and the NEA Representative Assembly in Miami, Florida on July 2-7, 1991, are due to Credentials and Ballot Chair Tom Boyle, Springfield Technical Community College, One Armory Square, Springfield, MA by 5 p.m. **February 27, 1991.** Nomination forms appeared on the last page of the January **Newsletter.** Elections will be held during the first week of April.

- In order to better respond to chapters' needs for faster communications, the MCCC has purchased a FAX machine for each chapter president, officer, and coordinator. All machines should be on line within a few weeks.

Hold Those Ballots

Within the next month, all unit members should be receiving ballots from the MTA at their homes. **Please do not throw these ballots away.** There are many community college candidates from Region H for the NEA annual meeting. If these members are elected, it then allows the MCCC to send additional delegates.

Know Your Contract

- Mar. 3** Sabbatical Leave Committee recommends and ranks sabbatical proposals
- Mar. 15** UPPC recommends tenure or one-year appointments
- Mar. 15** Dean recommends title changes
- Mar. 26** Faculty submit preferred courses for Fall, 1991
- Mar. 30** Evaluation of department chair

N.B. Dates vary depending on first day of classes. Also, most of these dates are "last date" standards. In many instances, the action can be accomplished before the date indicated.

MCCC Newsletter

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