Strike Talks Stall Again

SGA Calls for Tuition Boycott

Mediator Post Causes Conflicts

By Ann Karen McLean

A four and a half hour meeting between state negotiator Frank Mason and the AFT leadership on Monday resulted in a seemingly unsolvable paradox, according to Jeffery Tener, acting director of the Public Employment Relations Commission.

Tener said that while both sides have agreed to the need of a mediator to settle the dispute, the state and the union leadership have yet to agree on the conditions under which mediation may take place.

Mason explained that the state is willing to allow mediation on the condition that the strike end first. However, he continued, “we will not be ready to talk money until some time in January,” and, he admitted, the “items of substance” do involve money.

“The state is somewhat inconsistent in its position,” concluded Tener.

Union leader Marcoantonio Lacatena has implied that the state cannot be trusted in that it has “reneged on its agreements before.” Should some agreement occur as to the conditions for mediation, both sides agreed to appoint Thomas Colosi, deputy director of the National Center for Dispute Settlement in Washington DC.

According to Dr. Robert R. Beckwith, history professor at MSC, “our only strength is in striking...it is our only pressure.” Beckwith concluded that the state is “stalling...to see how long we can hold out.”

When asked about the adverse affects that this “power play” might have on state college students, Lacatena initially expressed his concern for students, but when pressed on the issue, the union leader retorted: “Goddammit, why should I be the one to give a damn all the time? Why doesn’t somebody else give a damn?”

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Lacatena stated that no further discussions between himself and Mason are being planned at this time. The union leader pointed out that in one respect, students are receiving an education in spite of the strike. “You are participating in an historical event...it is a good experience...life is not 100% smooth,” he said.

MAOC Concert Forced
to Montclair High

By Dean Brianik

Following the removal of a concert from campus last weekend, the union found itself facing student charges of “gross abuse of power” and “irresponsibility.”

Leaders of the Music and Arts Organization Commission (MAOC) charged that the union went back on an agreement allowing the concert to take place on campus. Union leaders admitted that the concert to take place on campus. Union leaders admit a change was made, but say it was done to protect union interests.

The concert by the New Symphony of New York was scheduled for Sun., Nov. 24. When the strike began, Craig Hughes, president of MAOC got a written agreement from Marcoantonio Lacatena, president of the campus chapter of the New Jersey American Federation of Teachers.

LACATENA AGREED that no picket lines would be set up during either the concert or rehearsal. Symphony members had stated they would honor picket lines if they were set up.

Hughes claimed that Lacatena backed off from the agreement because of pressures of other striking music teachers. He said that the concert was held at Montclair High School, but added that, “the weekend’s actions are a firm indication of how little the union leadership cares for students.”

In a telephone interview on Monday, Lacatena admitted he cancelled the agreement because one member of the music department who was to perform was not honoring the picket line. He said he could not give this person what he termed “special privileges.” He added with a chuckle, “They were lucky we didn’t picket at Montclair High.”

Mary Rosenstein, the advisor to MAOC, denied Lacatena’s statements saying, “Three members of the music department were involved in the concert and all were honoring the picket line.”

IN A SECOND interview the following day, Lacatena admitted that he was never given the name of the professor who allegedly was not honoring the picket line. He also conceded that he did not try to confirm the information from outside sources.
Tuition Boycott Urged

MONTCLARION

Wed., Nov. 27, 1974
Vol. 49 No. 13
Montclair, N.J. 07043
Joan Mietkusz editor-in-chief
Diane Palmieri editorial page editor

2. MONTCLARION Wed., Nov. 27, 1974

Students at the state colleges must feel like the rope in the tug-of-war as both the state and faculty vie for student sentiments.

The faculty would have the students believe that the strike will benefit them because, should the faculty win their points, they say the quality of education will increase.

Higher salaries for teachers will draw more qualified professors, they claim, who would otherwise go to private schools. However, figures show that the average salaries for faculty members at state colleges in New Jersey are higher than those at private colleges.

When they say they are arguing for smaller class size what they actually are talking about is a reduced workload for themselves.

The state, on the other hand, will do anything they can to pit the students against the faculty and on their side, the purpose being to make the strike seem ineffective with students going to their classes as usual. The theory of divide and conquer here could work wonders, they hope.

The state will say the faculty don't really care about students, but the state does not seem to be caring much either about the students, or they would have served an injunction to get classes back into operation.

They seem to care little that the students are getting ripped off the amount of tuition paid for the week and a half that the strike has consumed so far. Nor do they seem concerned that the possibilities of credit mixups and extended semesters could cause great inconvenience with more than a couple of students.

Students also are being lured into not caring, or so it seems. Once again, we urge students not to let themselves get taken in. Go to your classes that are being held and call or write to the governor's office and the chancellor of higher education's office demanding an injunction.

Don't support the state. Don't support the faculty. Support yourself.

Next Regular Issue of the MONTCLARION
Thurs., Dec. 5, 1974
Opposition Hitting Back at Strikers

By Mike Finnegan
Recent developments at certain stricken state colleges indicate that lines of opposition have sharpened between the state and the NJ Council of State College Locals.

At Ramapo State College, where the strike has been judged as 70% to 80% effective, striking members of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) local there have issued two pamphlets condemning colleagues who have crossed the picket lines to teach classes.

The first pamphlet, "What Is Scabbing?" opposes the strike breakers for undermining the AFT fight to achieve their demands. The second, "Notorious Scabs," lists 22 teachers as "notorious scabs" for crossing the picket lines since the beginning of the strike last Monday and four teachers as "not-so-notorious" scabs who originally honored the strike but had to return to work recently for need of salary.

On Sunday the Stockton Parents Association, representing 3500 parents of Stockton State students, passed a resolution urging NJ Governor Brendan T. Byrne to reopen stalled negotiations between the state and AFT officials. RALPH BEAN, president of Stockton's AFT local, suggested that the parents leaned toward the side of the striking teachers, basing his claim on the wording of the resolution, which called for both sides "to negotiate" rather than for one side to capitulate.

Also, Stockton's striking faculty members sent letters to their non-striking colleagues, urging them that if they crossed the picket lines out of desire not to deprive students of an education, and to apply their salaries to a union fund for tuition scholarships. There has been no immediate response to the mailout, as the strike at Stockton remains at about 85% effective, according to AFT figures.

According to Monday's Trenton Evening Times, the strike at Trenton State College remains about 35-40% effective, according to college officials, following the college-wide meningitis scare and mass inoculations that resulted from three cases of spinal meningitis among Trenton State students.

In a press conference held Monday in his offices in Trenton, Ralph A. Dungan, the vice-president for education, and AFT officials, stated that the strike was close to 50% effective. Dungan quipped, "This is a straight faculty benefits document."

A spokesperson for the Beacon, the newspaper at William Paterson College, reported an additional incident of arrest of picketing strikers disrupting traffic on the campus on Monday. A student, Paul R. Rio and a faculty member, Cary Goodman of the sociology department, were arrested and charged with disorderly conduct when they continually pounded with their fists the car belonging to student Vincent Mitchell.

For Duration of Strike
Walk-Out Strikes Note of Paradox

By Robert J. Braun
Reprinted from
Sunday Star Ledger, Nov. 24

The walkout by faculty members at New Jersey's eight state colleges has produced a number of contradictions and paradoxes which have even the most analytic minds in the higher education community confused.

Why, for example, should a substantial number of students join the strike with the rationale that the walkout will help prevent tuition increases from increasing — when it's not likely that a large wage settlement with the faculty will do anything but ensure higher tuitions?

Why should union negotiators denounce the Public Employment Relations Commission as "meaningless" — when the public employs union of the state fought so hard to strengthen PERC?

Why do faculty members who make upwards of $20,000 join a strike when the primary issue is wages?

Why has State Higher Education Chancellor Ralph A. Dungan, by position and sentiment the strongest advocate of state colleges, taken the position that perhaps it's time to look for higher education to other needs of the state?

Finally, why should the union have struck last week — when the state colleges are among persons with families have found themselves under considerable job security once tenure is attained.

Now, the question of salaries. By most standards, faculty salaries are not intolerable. A full professor, for example, at William Paterson College in Wayne, more students manned the picket lines than did faculty members. They were more militant than the instructors — and more likely to give their fellow students a "hassle" when the latter tried to cross the picket lines.

"Don't you understand if you go in there," one student picket shouted into the ear of a scholasticate, "you're guaranteeing higher tuition for all of us."

A leaflet passed out by students at William Paterson linked the faculty strike with the student opposition to increased tuition and insisted that classes be boycotted to insure higher salaries and lower tuitions.

At first blush, it would seem that higher faculty salaries would mean higher tuitions — and in a general sense, that's true. State college tuition payments are not kept by the state colleges, but rather are turned over to the general state funds from which are appropriated the monies to pay for the operation of the state colleges.

There is no direct link between state college tuitions and faculty salaries, not yet anyway. But there is a link between costs and income. Faculty salaries are a cost item; tuition is an income item. Ultimately, there is a nexus between the two: it's not likely that the costs of higher education can continue to increase at a 15 per cent annual rate while tuition remains stable.

Indeed, the State Department of Higher Education is studying a plan under which costs would be linked directly to tuition, so that, as costs rise, so would the tuition rates. Faculty salaries make up about 60 to 70 per cent of the higher education budget.

There's, of course, a benefit to be derived from low tuitions. But it is a benefit which has its costs: obviously the larger the subsidy to higher education, the lower the subsidy to some other service.

In any event, this is clear: if the faculty members win their wage demands, it may not mean an immediate increase in tuitions, but it certainly won't guarantee tuition stabilization. It's likely to go the other way "round ultimately.

News Analysis

While the student opposition to increased tuition has no rational economic relation to increased faculty salaries, some students see a political connection. One student at Montclair State put it this way:

"The way we figure it, the state will be asking for a tuition increase soon. The students will oppose it — and we won't be able to study alone. We'll need the faculty. If we help the faculty now, they will help us oppose tuition."

One student flyer passed out during the strike insisted that the only way to ensure faculty support for lower tuition is to "unite students and teachers throughout the strike in order to provide effective support for our (student) demands."

This particular view is based on a very tenuous assumption — namely that the faculty union will strike in support of lower tuitions, should that issue ever come to a head. Nowhere in the United States — at no time in the brief history of collective bargaining among American colleges and universities — has a union struck to lower tuitions.

Indeed, if tuitions are tied to costs, it would be against the best economic interests of faculty members to strike — and lose pay — in order to guarantee that the fund from which subsequent pay raises are drawn would be kept at a minimal level. Economic interests among persons with families have been known to be paramount to political considerations concerning deals with students.

But romanticism is not yet dead on campus classrooms. If the students believe they can join with the faculty to bring down, as one flyer put it, the "imperialist" Byrne Administration, they should have the right to maintain that belief.

The question of union opposition to PERC intervention is a more difficult phenomenon to perceive. During the spring, public employees unions fought vigorously in the Legislature for a strengthening of PERC. The commission was praised to the highest — it was to be the salvation of public employment bargaining.

The commission, of course, has played a role in the state-faculty dispute. Its professional staff, headed by Acting Executive Director Jeff Tener, has probably done more to bring the conflict to an end than any state agency.

Yet union negotiators condemned its procedures as "meaningless" and charged PERC could not play a mediating role because, since it was a state agency, it would be biased in favor of the faculty.

Furthermore, neither side called for PERC intervention during the negotiations before the strike was called. The commission has regulations by which, if an impasse is reached, PERC can be called in to mediate or provide fact-finding. The union's position was that the state could not bargain in good faith — therefore an impasse had been reached and a mediator could be called in. Yet the union would not call in PERC. Why not?

Marcoantonio Lacatena, president of the striking Council of New Jersey State College Locals, first charged that the state refused to permit PERC's intervention. Tener denied this — and he has absolutely no interest in equivocating. Then Robert Bates, the negotiator from the council's parent American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO, said he believed PERC's intervention was meaningless when the state refused to negotiate.

This assumes, of course, that the state refused to negotiate, that, even if it did, it would continue to refuse despite PERC mediation and finally, that the very agency the public employ unions fought so hard to create was viewed by those same unions as meaningless for the very purposes it was created to serve.

Those are difficult assumptions to swallow, especially the last. It is easier to understand that the union's overall strategy was to keep PERC out, for whatever tactical advantage the union could make of it. That, of course, raises serious questions about just how meaningful were all those glowing reports about PERC during the legislative battle over its strengthening last spring.

If PERC is to be used simply as a pawn in the negotiations game, why was it elevated to a position paramount to that of the commission in reaching educational disputes by the recent PERC legislative amendments? Now, the question of salaries. By most standards, faculty salaries are not intolerable. A full professor, working 18 contract hours per week and six hours per week in the summer, can, after eight years, make more than $30,000 a year.

A good state college faculty member, and most are, no doubt, good teachers, works hard for his money. But it is by no means physically taxing — like construction work — or dangerous — like service work — or physically taxing — like construction work — or dangerous — like service work. It is, however, interesting to consider the considerable job security once tenure is attained.

But there is much more stress and tension on campus. Feelings expressed by some faculty members reflect a fear that the future is grim. Indeed, it may be. Within the next few years, enrollments can be expected to take a tail spin. Higher education, like public education itself, no longer will subsidize simply by growth.