FROM THE PRESIDENT’S DESK...

ILLINOIS IS BROKE

It seems that all we see on television, read in the papers, or listen to on radio is the world-wide economic crisis. Every taxing body is broke, from our school boards and our cities to the states and our nation. Despite the U.S. government’s “one-time fix, the causes of the crisis remain intact.

Then there is Illinois. Our state budget is $52 billion dollars. According to most sources, Illinois has $13.5 billion in unpaid bills. It does not take a math wizard to plainly see that something must be done, and done quickly, to avoid an economic disaster. We in community colleges will be the first to feel the impact if our elected officials continue to do nothing but borrow, cut and remain in an imaginary world of denial. There is nothing left to cut; there is nowhere else to borrow.

Already the impact of this has been wide and deep. From K-12 and higher education to mass transit, libraries, health care and social services, everyone has been touched. Here at the CCCTU, we are concerned about the impact on our colleges and on our members. Already some of our colleges have called in our Union leaders to talk about the fiscal impact cuts and declining property tax revenues could have. There has been talk of “givebacks;” program eliminations; reductions in force; hiring freezes; and worse. These are not joyful days for community colleges. Some of these things are happening now.

STOP THE PRESS!

As the Voice went to press, the Illinois Legislature rushed through a two-tiered pension “reform package” on March 24 that makes drastic pension cuts for future teachers and public employees. The principal sponsor of the bill (SB 1946) was House Speaker Michael Madigan who had the support of many of our “friends” in the House and Senate. The bill now goes to the governor. Local 1600 and the rest of labor will continue to fight to protect our pensions. See pages 10-11 for more on pensions.

Succinctly, Illinois is broke. We spend far more than we take in. For two decades the state has borrowed its way out of every problem, including “borrowing” from our SERS pension plan. SERS is broke for one reason: the state did not pay what they were mandated by law to pay. We paid our share; the state didn’t.

Our focus is, first, on saving jobs. We do not want a single member “reduced in force.” There is never a good time to lose a job. But in this economic environment it is doubly injurious. With an 11% unemployment rate in Illinois, the competition for the few jobs out there is fierce.

continued on page 2
FROM THE PRESIDENT’S DESK

Illinois is Broke (continued from front page)

Our second focus is on our preserving our pensions. You do not need me to remind you that our pensions are seen by many as not just the cause of the state’s “problems,” but the “solution” as well. This attack has been relentless and uncompromising and resulted in a bill that was passed on March 24 as the Voice was going to press that has created a two-tiered pension system. It is shameful.

Our third focus is our contracts. The days of 5% raises are gone. The battle is more on keeping what we have… keeping us all as “whole” as we possibly can. Many of our colleges are fighting to stay alive. We must be creative and imaginative at the table. We must work in partnership with our schools, other unions, other public entities such as the ICCB, to fight for the funding we need to continue to serve our students as they deserve.

Until the governor and the Illinois General Assembly deliver a responsible and adequate budget for education, we will not move this State forward. Our leaders incessantly tell us that education is the key to Illinois’ economic future. Every one of them tells us they are “for education” and “for teachers.” But nice words do not fix this horrendous problem. They must act. They must make the difficult, albeit unpopular, decisions to raise the necessary funds to pay their bills… just as we all do.

If we fail to make that investment in our colleges, we could lose young people we cannot afford to lose. We will never make up for a lost generation of Illinois students.

Our Union will use all of its weapons at its disposal to fight for what’s right for our members, and the colleges where we work. We will work together with our colleges to provide the support our community colleges need to carry out their mission: an educated workforce for Illinois’ future.

Our biggest weapon is you! We will be coming to each of you the next few weeks to ask your help in our fight. Join your Union brothers and sisters at the IFT’s Rally for Education in Springfield on Wednesday, April 21. It is crucial. Take a personal day to join the IFT in flooding the capitol with protesters demanding what’s right for education and Illinois. See page 19 for details.

At the same time, we also need every one of our 5,000 members to make a visit to their representatives and senators in their offices to drum our message home. They may not listen to me, but they cannot ignore 5,000 educators telling them the same thing… stand up and do the right thing.

“The politicians may not listen to me, but they cannot ignore 5,000 educators telling them the same thing… stand up and do the right thing.”

—Pres. Perry Buckley

SAVE THE DATE

April 21:  
IFT Rally for Education in Springfield

April 30:  
45th Annual CCCTU Banquet

June 18:  
Executive Board

July 7-11:  
AFT Convention in Seattle

July 16:  
House of Representatives

August 20:  
Executive Board

COOK COUNTY COLLEGE TEACHERS UNION,  
LOCAL 1600, AFL-CIO

President………………………………………………Perry Buckley  
Vice President, City Colleges Division………………Sonia Jean Powell  
Vice President, Suburban Faculty…………………..Jim O’Malley  
Vice President, Suburban Classified………………Jillian Verstrate  
Secretary………………………………………………Patricia Wenthold  
Treasurer………………………………………………Donald Radtke  
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Grievance Chairman…………………………………Tom Kodogeorgiou  
Special Assistant to the President………………….Randy Barnette  
Editorial Chair………………………………………..Todd Lakin  
Publicity Chair………………………………………Bill O’Connell  
Special Contributor…………………………………Bob Blackwood

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For news you can visit: www.ccctu.com  
Member of AFT Communications Association  
and Midwest Labor Press Association

Visit the CCCTU website: www.ccctu.com  
College Union Voice
THE LEGAL CORNER

Other Discrimination Laws that Can Help You in the Workplace

By Brenda D. Pryor, Esq.

Dear Union Sisters & Brothers,

You may be aware of some types of illegal discrimination in the workplace – race, religion, gender (including sexual harassment) – but there are other federal laws that can protect you in the workplace too. I am writing to you today to inform you of your rights with respect to age, disability, pregnancy and genetic information discrimination.

AGE DISCRIMINATION IN EMPLOYMENT ACT (ADEA)

As the American workforce continues to age – currently, over 16 million workers over 55 are working or seeking work – the ADEA will continue to provide crucial protections. Under federal law, individuals aged 40 or over are protected from unlawful discrimination. This applies to any term, condition, or privilege of employment including hiring, firing, promotion, layoff, benefits & compensation, job assignments or training. For example, an employer cannot refuse to train an older employee because they might retire soon and they can’t layoff older workers first, just because they make more money. Also, while the law does not specifically prohibit employers from asking for date of birth, any request for age will be scrutinized to insure that the inquiry was made for a lawful purpose.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA)

Discrimination based on a disability is prohibited by the ADA. Employers subject to the ADA cannot discriminate against a qualified worker with a disability, a worker with a history of impairment, or a worker who is regarded as disabled (even if the employer is wrong and the employee is not actually disabled). Disability is defined as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity; temporary ailments don’t count as disabilities. Please note that for an employee to seek protection under the ADA, they must be capable of performing the essential duties of the job and need no more than a “reasonable accommodation” to do so. Employers can claim that an accommodation is an “undue hardship,” in order to avoid providing the accommodation and/or not employ the disabled worker, but this is a claim that is subject to review by the EEOC to determine its legitimacy.

PREGNANCY DISCRIMINATION ACT

Pregnancy discrimination is one of the fastest growing segments of discrimination – the EEOC recorded a surge in pregnancy discrimination complaints of 14% in 2007, up 40% from a decade ago. Discrimination on the basis of pregnancy, childbirth or related medical conditions constitutes illegal gender discrimination under civil rights law. An employer is prohibited from refusing to hire, or terminating, a worker because of her pregnancy or because of the prejudices of co-workers, clients or customers. An employer cannot discriminate between pregnancy and other medical conditions – this includes medical leave, medical expenses and medical insurance coverage. Also, pregnancy benefits can’t be limited to married employees only.

GENETIC INFORMATION NONDISCRIMINATION ACT (GINA)

Protection of a person’s genetic information is a recently granted protection – this law took effect in November, 2009. This law states that it is illegal to discriminate against employees because of their genetic information, restricts employers’ acquisition of genetic information and places strict limits on disclosure of information. Genetic information includes information from genetic tests, genetic tests of family members and family medical history. Discrimination on any condition or privilege of employment is prohibited, and GINA also made it illegal to harass anyone because of his/her genetic information.

If you suspect that your rights have or are being violated in one of these areas, or experience conduct that you believe is discriminatory, please contact your Union representatives or the Union office immediately.

Further information on these, and all of the laws pertaining to discrimination, can be found at www.eeoc.gov.
NEWS YOU CAN USE

"Obey Now, Grieve Later"

By Chuck Mustari, Local 1600 Acting Grievance Chair

Question: What do you do if your supervisor tells you to do something that is outside your job description? Answer: Except in limited circumstances, the rule is “obey now, grieve later.” Even if management turns out to have been wrong in instructing you to do the work, you could be disciplined for insubordination by not complying.

The rights and responsibilities of the bargaining unit are established by (a) the federal and state constitutions, (b) state laws, (c) the collective bargaining agreement and (d) past practices. Employees may be lawfully disciplined for failing to follow a written directive or a direct order given by a supervisor, provided the directive or order is (a) lawful, (b) does not impair health or safety and (c) does not violate the bargaining agreement where there would be no adequate redress through the grievance procedure. An example of a violation under provision (c) would be an employee refusing to attend a disciplinary meeting without union representation.

The safety and health exception has limitations. It may not apply because of the nature of the employee’s occupation. Security officers are occasionally confronted with risks not faced by other workers. The risk must be unusual or abnormal for public safety personnel. In general, the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 protects employees from disciplinary actions for adhering to applicable OSHA regulations. In reviewing OSHA standards, the Supreme Court has noted that such a situation may arise when the employee is ordered by his employer to work under conditions that the employee reasonably believes pose an imminent risk of death or serious bodily injury, and the employee has reason to believe that there is not sufficient time or opportunity either to seek effective remedy from his employer or to tell OSHA of the danger.

The reason for strict enforcement of the “obey now, grieve later” rule is that the bargaining agreement contains a formalized grievance procedure, which is the exclusive method to protest the actions or demands of a superior or to challenge a managerial policy or directive. Work shouldn’t stop while the grievance procedure is being pursued and management has the authority to direct the work until the grievance is determined.

This is not to say that an employee shouldn’t tell management why he or she objects. Management may not know that the work should be done by someone in another classification or that there is an easier way to get the work done or that the employee is entitled to notice under the collective agreement. Also, don’t assume that every request by management is a directive. If the request is not clearly stated as a directive, ask for clarification. Sometimes, what the employee is being asked to do is just a mere request, but not a directive.

In the unfortunate chance you are directed by a supervisor to do something that is a violation of your rights, you should obey the directive then seek out your Union Representative. Don’t be insubordinate. Let the grievance process work for you.

“Don’t be insubordinate.
Let the grievance process work for you.”
—Chuck Mustari

HURRY!
TICKETS GOING FAST
45th ANNUAL CCCTU BANQUET
April 30, 2010
Registration form online at www.ccctu.com
Our Good Guys Were Working the Election

On Feb. 2, Illinois Primary Election Day, Local 1600 officers and members were quite busy. Wright Chapter Chair Linda Murphy went to state representative candidate Ann Williams’ headquarters (11th District) to pick up palm cards for her precinct. Williams is running for the seat formerly held by our friend John Fritchey.

At a Westside precinct at 3300 W. Arthington (Bethune School), Truman Chapter Chair Tony Johnston was working with three folks for Art Turner and other candidates. Meanwhile, at the union office, Legislative Chair Bill Naegele was using various media sources to try to get early election polling. Naegele noted: “It’s a light turnout. People are out of work and disgusted with all the politicians.”

In the morning Perry Buckley worked his precinct in the 11th Ward passing out palm cards and making sure those who needed rides to the polls got one. In the afternoon he worked the Dan Hynes phone bank getting his supporters out to vote.

Buckley conferred throughout the day with Naegele following the results of Local 1600-backed candidates. In the evening, Naegele and Buckley were invited to the Hynes campaign headquarters to wait for election results.

Assistant to the President Randy Barnette was holding the fort at his polling place. Barnette, the Democratic committeeman of the 39th Ward, spoke to a few voters outside of the office building with the polling place.

While we helped many candidates, Local 1600 specifically endorsed eight. Of the eight, six were elected in the Democratic Primary: Illinois House candidates Thaddeus Jones (29th), Ann Williams (11th), and Dan Bliss (17th); state senate candidate John Mulroe (10th); Illinois Comptroller candidate David Miller; and Illinois Treasurer candidate Robin Kelly.

Voice reporter Bob Blackwood was impressed by the efforts of his Local 1600 colleagues. “Thanks to all of you, our members, who voted, who worked for candidates whether they won or lost, and who worked at the polls. We’ll be asking you to do it again soon. Please, help us out and, by doing so, help yourself out,” Blackwood said.

“Thanks to all of you, our members, who voted, who worked for candidates whether they won or lost, and who worked at the polls.”
—Bob Blackwood
POLITICS

Buckley at the National AFL-CIO Executive Committee Winter Meeting

When Perry Buckley was elected president of Local 1600, one of the first people photographed with him was President Dennis Gannon, leader of the Chicago Federation of Labor. Gannon heads the coalition of Chicago unions, the largest regional federation in the state. He has been very helpful to us behind-the-scenes when we were in a job action or contemplating a job action. Recently, he has been very helpful in another context.

Gannon and the Chicago Federation’s Secretary-Treasurer Jorge Ramirez invited Buckley to attend the AFL-CIO Executive Committee Winter Meeting in Orlando, FL, in late February. It is a national event that lasts for four days. To Buckley’s knowledge, this is the first time Local 1600 had this particular opportunity to confer with the powers that be in Springfield.

At this event, the State of Illinois contingent always takes the time to meet with their legislators. This year, Governor Pat Quinn, Secretary of State Jesse White, Comptroller Dan Hynes, Treasurer Alexi Giannoulias and other constitutional officials were there.

A good number of the legislators were there as well, including Speaker Michael Madigan (D, 22); Senate President John Cullerton (D, 6); State Representative David Miller (D, 29), Democratic candidate for Illinois comptroller; State Senator Kwame Raoul (D, 13); State Representative Jay Hoffman (D, 112) and many more. As Buckley notes, the conversations are more leisurely when the legislators are out-of-state and out of range of the Springfield reporters.

The IFT was well represented at the meetings with President Ed Geppert, Secretary-Treasurer Marilyn Stewart, Director of Political Activities Steve Preckwinkle and Director of Field Services Lee Wilson. U.S. Vice President Joe Biden addressed the entire Executive Committee on Monday. The IFT worked as a unified group at all the meetings and events. Although a national meeting, Illinois was the best represented and organized group.

At the Illinois Breakfast on Monday, however, a smaller group of 35-40 unionists and legislators chatted together.

• Governor Quinn praised Illinois community colleges; “jobs follow education.” Community colleges are going to be in the forefront of education. He publicly thanked Local 1600 for fighting for community colleges and our students in Springfield. He noted the key to solving our problems in the community college system is a source of new funding. “We can’t cut and borrow our way out of this problem.”

• Senate President Cullerton will be working with Local 1600 to solve the pension problem. “We want to keep the promises we made to the teachers.” Buckley assured him that we would be there to continue the fight in Springfield for our pension system.

• State Rep. Miller publicly thanked Local 1600 for our help in his election. “I won because I put Perry Buckley and Bill Naegele on my campaign literature.” he joked.

• State Senator Raoul talked privately with Buckley. Raoul, a former member of the City Colleges of Chicago administration, has proven to be very supportive of efforts to fund community colleges throughout Illinois.

Buckley has returned to Chicago, and is ready to join the political battlefield in Springfield. He states, “Now that the primary election is over, we must get together to support those candidates who see the need for community colleges to provide Illinois with the workers to compete in the global marketplace.

“I thank Dennis Gannon and Jorge Ramirez for their confidence in me. I know my officers and members will be active at the IFT Rally for Education on April 21, and during the fall election to help our colleges and our students.”

State Rep. David Miller (D, 29), Legislative Chair Bill Naegele and President Perry Buckley share a laugh. Miller is the Democratic Candidate for Illinois Comptroller.
I-UPC Slate Wins 29 Seats to AFT Convention

In an off-year where the only election to be held was the Delegates and Alternate Delegates Election to the 81st AFT Convention in Seattle, Washington, from July 7-10, the official results show the 29 delegates on Perry Buckley’s Independent-Union Progress Coalition slate easily won. An independent candidate, Patricia Tadda from Oakton Classified, received 61 votes vs. 890 for the smallest total on the I-UPC slate.

“Election Chair Valerie Green [of Oakton Classified] oversaw a well-run election,” Classified VP Jillian Verstrate said. “She did an outstanding job.”

Around noon on Friday, March 12, a group of Local 1600 members (none of whom were running for delegate or alternate delegate positions) and volunteer students gathered in the basement of the CCCTU’s office to begin counting the votes. Election Adjudicator Brenda D. Pryor, Esq. and Election Coordinator Randy Barnette gave specific instructions on how to efficiently and quickly tabulate the vote counts.

“First, sort the ballots and tally the number of votes cast so that we can compare that number with the number of unmarked ballots,” Barnette said.

“Then sort the ballots into four piles: one for straight-ticket, one for individuals, one with write-ins and the fourth for spoiled ballots,” he continued. “If you have any doubt,” added Pryor, “call me over so that I can render a decision.”

The process went smoothly. The fourteen vote counters – CCC VP Sonia Jean Powell, Truman Chapter Chair Tony Johnston, Wright Security delegate Dennis Fitzgerald, eight students from Wright Chapter Chair Linda Murphy’s class and three members of Morton Classified (Maria Smith, Michelle Herrera and Guadalupe Zarco) – took little more than four hours to complete the counting. Joining Verstrate to observe the election were Local 1600 Secretary Pat Wenthold and Morton Classified Chair Tim Visk.

As the vote counting continued downstairs, Barnette would occasionally run upstairs to tabulate the on-going vote count with Chuck Mustari who had created an Excel spreadsheet to quickly quantify the results. The official results were certified by the Union House of Delegates on Friday, March 19.

For the official vote tally, please visit the website: www.ccctu.com.
GUEST COLUMNIST

From ILGWU (Local 89) to CCCTU (Local 1600): My Lesson in Leadership

By Rochelle Robinson-Dukes, Olive-Harvey Chapter Chair

We union members today are lucky. We can call a strike before someone has to die due to unsafe working conditions. We, unlike the International Ladies Garment Workers’ Union, do not have to lose 146 members in the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire of March 25, 1911, to elicit a strike. This fire was the catalyst for Rose Schneiderman’s speech at the Metropolitan Opera House on April 2, 1911. Her speech prompted Clara Lemlich’s resolution for a strike.

While this was not their first strike, its motivation helped precipitate laws for laborers, such as the National Labor Relations Act (“Wagner Act”) of 1935. When I think of both of these women’s need to speak to an audience of mostly female immigrant workers who were living on the edge of existence, I see leadership at its most fearless.

They were speaking to women who worked in a gamey environment. The working climate in New York’s garment shops over a century ago was harsh. Employees worked close to sixty hours a week; speed was essential to keep a job. Workers who could not keep up with demand were fired. Shops acted like plantations. Workers were sharecroppers in the city.

The immigrant workers were charged for the use of the needles and thread or sewing machines. They were fined for damaging a garment or for arriving tardy. On top of this, they were paid little money, still less than men made for the same work. Losing the job was not the only issue. A strike could be brutal. The women could endure being arrested by police or being beaten by management’s hired thugs as they had experienced both in the first strike.

Regardless of these obstacles, these women were able to incite action in others and change the working conditions of female workers.

Now, while women still make less than men, the conditions of employment are much better for both women and men. This is due in large part to union organizing and leadership.

Leadership such as that of Schneiderman and Lemlich is not common. It requires a special skill set. Good union leaders must do a variety of things besides simply knowing the contract. The following list – my “Fearless Five Functions of Leadership” – helps me in the daily grind to give justice to my members and not become a tyrant. Good union leaders:

1. must listen to their membership.
2. give/force members to make decisions collectively.
3. keep their members informed.
4. create unique modes of communication other than face-to-face interaction such as newsletters.
5. take suggestions from their executive boards and their members. There is an “i” in union, but the “I” does not run the union. We all vote; we all count.

I love Local 1600, not only because of guaranteed sick and personal days, an annual raise, a pension and health insurance but also because of the workshops and conferences on leadership, grievances, and collective bargaining that I am allowed to attend. These union-sponsored personal development workshops assist me in better servicing my membership. It is my sincere desire to continue to fight for Local 1600 members.

I am often reminded of Clara Lemlich’s words “If I turn traitor to the cause I now pledge, may this hand wither from the arm I now raise.” I don’t want to lose an appendage, so I will try to live by those words faithfully.
OUR ACTIVE RETIREES

CCC Retirees: 10 Years after Retirement

So you retired from the City Colleges of Chicago sometime in May, 2000, with a June 1 retirement date. That means on June 1, 2010, you will lose your subsidized, early retirement CCC Blue Cross-Blue Shield (BCBS) health insurance plan. You will have to pay the full cost of your BCBS health insurance plan as of June 1, 2010.

• If you worked in a job(s) that gave you enough quarters of Social Security, Medicare will be your first provider. In that case, with Medicare as the primary provider, the monthly cost for the BCBS PPO plan (single coverage) will be $429.64 a month. The BCBS HMO IL plan (single coverage) will be $192.83 monthly. The rates will not change until 1/1/2011.

• “Can I switch from BCBS PPO to BCBS HMO IL?” Only during the Annual Open Enrollment period.

• If you do not have Medicare or if your spouse does not have Medicare, the monthly cost will be $666.37 for the BCBS PPO (single coverage) $589.33 for the BCBS HMO IL (single coverage).

• If you have a family with more than one dependent, you do get a family rate.

• Keep in mind, whatever insurance plan you choose, you will lose your dental and vision coverage, which are provided by other companies.

• For more information on this matter and other retirement questions, consult CCC Benefits Supervisor Sonia Almanza at 312-553-2894. If you get voicemail, please be prepared to leave a detailed message; someone will get back to you as soon as possible.

• Unless you indicate otherwise, the CCC may have the cost of your current BCBS plan taken from your SURS annuity check each month beginning June 1, 2010.

• The people at the Human Resources, Benefits division, can be very helpful to you. Give them the data they need to do their jobs. No one at the CCC wants you to pay more than you have to for health insurance. The CCC even gave us a photo of the Benefits Division so that you can identify their names with their faces.

If you don’t want to continue with the CCC-based BCBS health plan, what options do you have?

• There are many plans out there. Whether you have Medicare or you don’t, though you must be under 65 if you don’t have Medicare, the AARP will offer you a number of reputable health insurance plans, including dental and vision plans, if you go to www.aarphealthcare.com or call toll-free at 1-800-272-2146. The people there are professionals, used to dealing with retirees.

• But you must make your decision within a certain amount of days after losing your current BCBS coverage from the CCC or you may be facing a problem of being denied coverage due to “pre-existing conditions” from any other insurance plan.

• Keep in mind, you must be sure that your health insurance contains coverage for prescription drugs for yourself and any family members. Most plans do not contain this coverage; some may. The CCC-based BCBS PPO and BCBS HMO IL currently have it.

• Before making a decision, you should total up the amount of money your prescription drugs now cost you per year without the subsidy given via the union contract. It may be an eye-popping figure.

• Stay healthy, brothers and sisters, but prepare for the alternative.

For individual non-CCC-based Blue Cross Blue Shield plans, which may be cheaper with probably correspondingly lower coverage, and for vision and dental services, consider the following providers in addition to AARP:

Blue Cross Blue Shield (HMO and PPO Health Plans) http://www.bcbsil.com/coverage/individual/index.html (800) 624-1723 for age 65 older (800) 654-7385 for under age 65

CompBenefits Dental http://www.humanaonedental.com 1-866-945-4450


IFT’s Preckwinkle Preps
Local 1600 Retirees to Defend Their Pensions

Although it had snowed the night before, a total of 67 retirees from the Cook County College Teachers Union braved the slick streets to hear what their chapter chair, Norm Swenson, President Perry Buckley and the IFT’s Director of Political Activities, Steve Preckwinkle, had to say about attacks on their pensions. They gave the speakers their complete attention. They almost filled the largest room at the IFT’s Westmont Headquarters.

Swenson went to the heart of the matter right away: “We can anticipate attacks in two areas.”

• The annual 3% cost-of-living adjustment which they contributed toward when they gave 8.5% of every paycheck to the State of Illinois.
• The freedom from state income tax on their pension payments.

Buckley noted that roughly 70% of the Illinois State Budget goes for education on the K-12 level as well as for healthcare.

• That doesn’t leave much to give the state any flexibility to pay down the multi-billion dollar debt owed to the Illinois pension systems.
• And if they create a two-tier pension plan, no one will want to be a teacher, if no one receives a pension. You would be better off in private industry.

Preckwinkle presented a dire vision of the present, let alone the future. “There is so much riding on this election,” he stated.

• Illinois is the number one state in pension debt with an estimated $80 billion. The interest is growing to the point where the state soon can’t even pay the interest on the debt. We have to stabilize pension funding.
• What we have in Illinois is a “structural revenue deficit”—caused by state revenue growth not growing at a rate sufficient to maintain current services from year to year. This has been occurring for decades and has led to the extreme debt Illinois now faces.
• Blue ribbon panels have now reviewed our pension benefit levels and have found them to be in the mainstream nationally when compared to similar plans in other states.
• Private industry is paying almost double for employee benefits (9.7-10%) vs. 5.5% for state paid benefits.
• While the current pension benefits are protected by the Illinois Constitution, healthcare benefits are not.
• If Con-Con had passed, our opponents would have an excuse to cut our constitutionally protected pension benefits. If a movement is made to create another constitutional convention, it will be the first item if it wins at the polls.
• The Civic Committee of the Commercial Club of Chicago is calling for a significant tax hike, but it wants to cut benefits for all state pension plans at the same time.

continued on next page
IFT’s Preckwinkle Preps
(continued from previous page)

• The Illinois income tax, as presently constituted, is a great system for preserving wealth, if you are wealthy. It is a regressive tax system if you are poor or middle class. House Bill 174 could change that.
• Currently in Illinois, no one retirement’s income, whether private or public, is taxed. That includes many wealthy and upper income individuals—corporate executives, doctors, lawyers, etc.
• The State Senate under the leadership of President John Cullerton passed a tax-hike bill with Democratic votes only. Speaker Michael Madigan has refused to call any tax bill in the House for a final vote unless there is bi-partisan support for it.
• Why are we going to support Pat Quinn for governor? The best reason is two words: Bill Brady. He represents an extreme position in the Republican Party.

The seminar ended with Chapter Chair Swenson vowing to bring more retirees to Springfield for the IFT Rally for Education on April 21 and many questions from the retirees for all of the three speakers.

Blackwood Hosts Buckley, Others on CAN-TV:
“Crisis in Funding”

On Feb. 17, three distinguished guests joined Dr. Bob Blackwood to tape a CAN-TV show entitled, “The Crisis in Illinois Community College Funding.” The one-hour show was cablecast twice on Channel 19 in March and downstate stations may also cablecast the show after March 5 via public access programming.

The guests were:
• CEO Terry Bruce of Illinois Eastern Community Colleges—a four-college system—and a former Illinois state senator and former U.S. congressman.
• CCCTU President Perry Buckley, directly representing the 22 chapters within 14 community colleges in Cook County and four institutes, a vice president of the Illinois Federation of Teachers and president of the Community College Council, representing members at 32 community colleges in Illinois.
• Chairman Kathy Wessel of the Board of Trustees at the College of DuPage and 2008 president of the Illinois Community College Trustees Association, which represents all community college trustees throughout Illinois.

The concern is that the Illinois community colleges have received only approximately one-half of the state funding that the State of Illinois has promised for this fiscal year. While this is an inconvenience to some affluent communities, it is a real concern to communities without extensive real estate tax sources of income. Some Illinois community colleges may have to close; they do not have the contingency funds to continue. Both the problem and suggestions on how to solve it were in the show. During the last four minutes of the one-hour show, President Buckley gave a concise defense and analysis of the present SURS retirement program.
“We, the worker, are not entitled to take a pension holiday, unlike the state.”
—President Perry Buckley

Suburban VP Jim O’Malley discusses the State of Illinois’ Economic Crisis and its impact on Triton’s Mid-Managers Association.

Triton Mid-Managers Face Grim Reality with Good Leadership

On a beautiful day before the official start of spring, the Triton College Mid-Managers Association met for its annual In-Service Training on March 19. Representing Local 1600 were President Perry Buckley, Suburban VP Jim O’Malley and Legal Council Brenda Pryor.

O’Malley described the current economic situation as “a fiscal nightmare” and also gave some Triton history vis-à-vis past economic difficulties. “From the beginning of the Illinois Community College system,” O’Malley began, “local taxes would pay one third, the student would pay a third in tuition and the state would pay a third. The state has only been reimbursing the colleges at a rate of 16% and now has threatened not to pay the third- and fourth-quarter installments.” He furthered discussed how the contraction announced by the college last week would impact the faculty and its potential ramifications on other employee groups like the Mid-Managers.

President Perry Buckley began his talk by first commending the leadership of John Cadero and echoed O’Malley’s remarks about the state financial crisis. He also talked briefly about C.O.P.E. and how the CCCTU has been stingy about doling out contributions during this election season. “We have received more attention by not contributing money to some of our traditional allies than we did in the past. We have told them that we want their voting record to be labor-friendly,” he said. Buckley further discussed the state of SURS and how the pension system problems are caused by the state’s failure to keep up its end of the pension bargain. “We, the worker, are not entitled to take a pension holiday, unlike the state,” Buckley stated. When Buckley opened the floor for discussion, many expressed concern about frivolous spending by the administration. This sentiment was expressed succinctly by one of the chapter members who said, “It seems in these days of belt tightening, not all belts are being tightened.” Buckley assured the audience that the Triton administration is not the only college guilty of such practices.

He concluded with a personal story about Triton’s Respiratory Care program scheduled to be eliminated. A friend of Buckley places Triton’s Respiratory Care graduates at Northwestern University Hospital. She is the head respiratory nurse and articulates Triton’s RC grads with Northwestern University’s baccalaureate degree program. She is concerned about losing her pool of graduates in a profession that needs these technicians.

Finally, Pryor thanked Cadero and his team of Rosa Preston, Jackie Marx and Kay Frey for their leadership. She reminded the membership to communicate any problems, regardless of how small, to their chapter leaders.

Enjoying Triton’s Mid-Managers In-Service are Athletic Director Harry McGinnis and Network Specialists Joe Szewculak and Barbara Bester.
The Triton College Classified Association held its annual In-Service Training on campus on St. Patrick’s Day. Chapter Chair Missy Cabrera introduced her executive committee, Maude Partacz, Linda Nordstrom and Linda Ricchio and recognized those who helped produce a successful agenda. Representing the CCCTU were President Perry Buckley, Classified VP Jillian Verstrate and Acting Grievance Chair Chuck Mustari.

Buckley commended Cabrera’s leadership and discussed the sad financial state of the state and how it has impacted classified members. He also recognized retiring executive committee members Partacz and Ricchio while reinforcing the importance of joining the retiree chapter. “If Missy doesn’t sign you up to join, then Norm [Swenson, the Retirees Chapter Chair] most certainly will,” he joked.

Mustari gave a moving PowerPoint presentation on “Bullying in the Workplace” which included a video highlighting some typical bullying scenarios. “Bullying and harassment are not the same thing,” Mustari began. “Harassment is illegal and usually includes elements like religious, cultural or sexual orientation. Bullying is less quantitative and includes but is not limited to belittling colleagues and putting people down.” According to Mustari, “Bullying is four-times more prevalent than illegal harassment. I urge everyone to tell their State Senator and Representatives to support House Bill 374 and Senate Bill 3566. We need to make all forms of bullying illegal.”

Other topics included an update from Triton’s new insurance provider, Oral Health, and “Your Body and Stress Management” courtesy of Triton’s Employee Assistance Program.

“This year’s in-service was well attended,” Cabrera said. “Our membership found the topics both stimulating and informative. The overall mood of the day was positive and there was a good feeling of solidarity.”
HWC Scholarship Fundraiser: An Intimate Affair

On a rainy Sunday afternoon on March 7, a small but intimate group of Harold Washington College faculty and professionals and Local 1600 officers CCC V.P. Sonia Jean Powell and Secretary Pat Wenthold gathered together at Thalia Spice Restaurant at 833 W. Chicago Ave. in Chicago to raise money for the Albert Soglin and Thomas J. McBride Memorial Scholarships. “While we did sell almost the same amount of tickets this year as last, not as many made it out today,” Scholarship Committee co-chair Jesú Estrada said. “Still, it has been a fun event today and we look forward to continuing the tradition,” added the other co-chair, Natalia Zúñiga.

For those who did make it out, they were feted with delicious Thai food, two complementary drinks, coffee and cake prepared by a former Local 1600 member. “It’s a real treat to eat at Thalia’s,” Chapter Chair Phil Stucky said. “Anna Maumok really knows how to make excellent food. While we miss her at Harold Washington College, I think that she made the right career choice,” he gushed.

During dinner, co-chair Zúñiga introduced the other members of the Scholarship Committee, thanking each “for their hard work in planning this event as well as reading all the applications. They are Betty Harris, Teresita Díaz-Lewis, Anthony Escuadro and Theresa Carlton,” Zúñiga said. “Also, a special thanks is reserved for Saed Rihani who handled the tickets for the event,” she added.

Like last year’s fundraiser, two past scholarship winners were invited to the fundraiser to update the members on how the scholarships had helped them. Also, there was a silent auction to raise more money for the scholarship fund.

The annual scholarship banquet is on Friday, May 7 at Greek Islands Restaurant.
SCHOLARSHIP BANQUETS

KKC Scholarships “Best Sellers” with Student Recipients

The Kennedy-King Chapter’s Annual Book Scholarship Awards Banquet on Jan. 28 was an elegant yet simple ceremony that focused on the raison d’etre for the banquet: the students and their awards. Although bitterly cold outside, the banquet and the guest speakers at KKC’s Great Hall were warm and welcoming.

KKC Chapter Chair Arlicia Corley kicked off the event with a brief welcome before turning the microphone over to Mistress of Ceremonies Sharonda Benson, who thanked everyone for attending. Guest speaker Pamela Cannamore offered inspiring words in her speech whose theme was “wisdom.” Like a Sunday-morning preacher, she had the audience repeat “wisdom is not selfish” throughout her talk. And, in what is becoming an annual tradition, for the third year in a row, Cannamore read the poem that she had written for the 2008 banquet. Titled, “Butterflies Were Birthed Today,” the message uplifted the spirits of those in the room.

Benson then called upon one of her students, Aaron Archie, to perform a musical selection. She noted that, at the start of each semester, she has her students stand, introduce themselves and tell everyone about one special talent. “When Aaron told the class that he played the saxophone, I knew that we found our entertainment for the banquet,” Benson said. After a beautifully played number, Benson called up each recipient to receive his or her check and then asked all faculty present to stand to be recognized for donating to the book scholarship fund.

Finally, after words from the KKC administration, IFT Field Rep. Brenda Pryor said a few brief remarks. “Much like President Buckley, I’m the one standing between you and a hot meal so I’ll be brief,” she joked. “Therefore, on behalf of Local 1600, congratulations on your achievement,” Pryor said to applause as an appreciative and hungry audience lined up to taste the scrumptious soul food.

Benita Hunter happily supports the KKC Book Scholarship Fund.

Mistress of Ceremonies Sharonda Benson welcomes everyone to the KKC Union Book Scholarship Award Banquet on Jan. 28.

Pamela Cannamore (at right) lets the audience know that “wisdom is not selfish.”

Sonia Delgado-Tall applauds her colleagues (including herself) who donated to the KKC Book Scholarship Fund.

Benita Hunter happily supports the KKC Book Scholarship Fund.
OHC Warmly Celebrates Its Scholarship Winners

In what is becoming a warm and heart-felt tradition under the leadership of Chapter Chair Rochelle Robinson-Dukes, the annual Olive-Harvey scholarship ceremony is the perfect recipe: the right amount of pomp and circumstance with a dash of bonhomie, a pinch of humility and plenty of good-natured fun. The scholarship winners and their friends and family gathered with numerous faculty and Olive-Harvey President Clyde El-Amin in the theater on March 2 to be honored for their achievements.

Sitting on center stage, the celebrated scholars were introduced by Robinson-Dukes before CCC V.P. Sonia Jean Powell gave the keynote address. Focusing on the extraordinary life of George Washington Carver, Powell described his inspiring life story and the numerous obstacles he overcame to become one of the most important botanists in the world. “While he is the man who discovered over 300 practical uses for the lowly peanut, Carver was more than that. He was an excellent writer who penned many witty and inspirational quotes.”

Powell challenged the students to read biographies of their heroes to learn more about their struggles and to recognize that “everyone, no matter how rich and famous, has had to strive for their success. To quote Carver himself,” Powell continued, “there is no short cut to achievement. Life requires thorough preparation - veneer isn't worth anything.” May his words inspire you to higher success,” she concluded.

For the complete story, please visit the website www.ccctu.com.
Buckley, CCCTU Leaders Busy with Campus Visits

It was quite a busy start to the semester for President Perry Buckley and other CCCTU officers. They attended six spring semester luncheons in four weeks: Wright and Daley on Jan. 13, Truman on Jan. 14, Triton Faculty on Jan. 19, Moraine Valley Support Staff on Jan. 29 and wrapped up at Malcolm X College on Feb. 9.

While each visit was unique in its own right, there were a number of key themes discussed at each. The main focus was the Feb. 2 Primary Election and the importance of voting for CCCTU-endorsed candidates. [Editor’s note: See Bob Blackwood’s summary on page 5]. Other important issues covered were the on-going financial woes of higher education, the severely underfunded pensions and the lack of political will in Springfield to resolve the financial crisis that the state is facing. And, as is par for the course, all visits ended with a question-and-answer session for members to ask Buckley specific questions.

Below are photos of the event. Individual stories and photos of each visit are on the website: www.ccctu.com.
Jane Reynolds looks over the agenda for the MXC Chapter meeting on Feb. 9.

MXC Chair William Stewart displays the ceremonial check representing over $3,000 that the chapter raised for Haitian Relief. President Perry Buckley and CCC V.P. Sonia Jean Powell proudly stand with Stewart.

William Stewart, Hope Essien, Reginah Walton, Michael White and CM! Winters-Palacio have formed a Tenured Mentoring Taskforce to assist non-tenured faculty with the onerous tenure process.

Posing with the chapter’s newest member Caressa Law (far right) are IFT Field Rep. Brenda Pryor, MV Chapter Chair Rose Sakanis and Legislative Chair Bill Naegele.

Joining new Triton faculty members Sue Carlson, Barbara Julian and Mukesh George (back row, right) are Joseph Stoilz, Sandra Hughes, Stu Sikora, Lesa Hildebrand, President Perry Buckley, Suburban VP Jim O’Mally and Chapter Chair Debra Baker.

President Perry Buckley addresses the Triton Faculty at the January 19 in-service.

Truman delegate José García passes $10 to give to the Red Cross Haiti Relief fund.

Legislative Chair Bill Naegele discusses endorsed legislators’ voting records with the MV Support Staff.

CAMPUS VISITS

Visiting new Triton faculty members Sue Carlson, Barbara Julian and Mukesh George (back row, right) are Joseph Stoilz, Sandra Hughes, Stu Sikora, Lesa Hildebrand, President Perry Buckley, Suburban VP Jim O’Mally and Chapter Chair Debra Baker.

Posing with the chapter’s newest member Caressa Law (far right) are IFT Field Rep. Brenda Pryor, MV Chapter Chair Rose Sakanis and Legislative Chair Bill Naegele.

Visit the CCCTU website: www.ccctu.com
CFL’s Ramirez at MVCC

Secretary/Treasurer Jorge Ramirez, of the Chicago Federation of Labor spoke on Feb. 16 at the Moraine Valley Library’s One Book, One College program on Studs Terkel’s Working. “Organized Labor” is one the program’s themes, and Mr. Ramirez reviewed the successes and challenges facing the labor movement. The audience was made up of economics and business students, thanks to the efforts of Professor Kevin Navratil and others.

Ramirez handled a number of questions from students saying: “There is not a question out there that can offend me when it comes to unions.” He had an open discussion with them on a number of issues. “The future of the labor movement here locally is something that I am a proud to be a part of. I enjoy the support of Perry Buckley from the Cook County College Teachers Union. We don’t just push for democracy in our country, but we also practice it in our own organizations.”

Buckley noted that Ramirez was talking with a number of students who were asking anti-union as well as very pro-management questions. “Ramirez answered every one of those questions precisely and factually. When he was done, every one of those students saw that the unions are part of a process that works; we are not the villains.”

Troy Swanson, coordinator of the event, said, “We were very happy that we could work with Local 1600 to coordinate this event and invite Mr. Ramirez to speak to our students. It is a rare opportunity to have a regional labor leader speak at our college, and our economics and business faculty jumped at the chance to bring their classes to this event.”

The online audio from the event can be found at http://ext.morainevalley.edu/librarynews/?p=456

IFT RALLY FOR EDUCATION DAY

How to get there?

1. IFT Charter Bus
   Contact: Judy Jennings by April 13
to reserve a seat (630) 468-4098
—Leaves from IFT Westmont Headquarters at 6:30 am on 4/21.

2. Car Pool
   The IFT will reimburse mileage for four persons per car.

   The IFT will provide a t-shirt for the Rally and a box lunch after the Rally.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 21!
Chapter Chair Sue Braasch of the Prairie State Support Chapter will be entering negotiations very soon for a new contract that will begin on July 1. Braasch’s comment: “I am ready for negotiations.” Braasch has been here before. This is her third term in office as chapter chair. She noted that the chapter had a number of good contracts. As a former grievance chair, she also observed: “We have a good relationship with the administration. We rarely have gone to arbitration. We try to talk things out and to avoid that.” As grievance chair, she only went to arbitration three times, settled twice and got a split decision the third time.

Braasch has about 90 chapter members. They do everything from maintaining the building & grounds to providing all the services that our students and faculty need to make sure the students have a successful experience at Prairie State.

When asked how she became chapter chair, she chuckled. “Well, they thought I was a good grievance chair, so they drafted me for chapter chair.” When asked why she would accept a position that requires so much of her spare time, a rare commodity among chapter chairs, she was frank: “I like helping people. And I think I look out for their best interests. It isn’t always easy to figure out what that is.”

Perhaps one of the reasons why she grew into the role of chapter chair is her background. Her father was a Steelworker who walked picket lines and wouldn’t cross any. Her husband, Chuck, worked for a long time with cold rolled steel as a member of the Longshoreman's Union. About five years ago, he became a CDL driver, piloting a truck around the Chicagoland region.

Braasch has four sons—James, William, Joe and Jon. She said James died of a drug overdose at 31 years-of-age, but she asked that he be mentioned. “I don’t want James to be forgotten.” She and Chuck frequently vacation with Jon and his family in Tennessee, where she also visits other members of her family in Knoxville and Nashville. She has nine grandchildren now and remembers their birthdays.

Sue Braasch, as she says, is pretty much “an open book.” If she says she is ready for negotiations, you can believe her.