



UUP to consider Retiree Chapter

Why is UUP considering a Retiree

Chapter? First, the union's retiree membership continues to grow. When the Committee on Active Retired Membership (COARM) was first formed, there were only a few hundred retirees; now there are more than 2,700. In order to accommodate this growth, the union looked at how the current structure was done to see how it could be changed to allow retirees to fully participate in UUP and its affiliates.

COARM has proposed creating a Retiree Chapter. This structure would allow the retirees to function more independently and take full advantage of participation in UUP affiliates. It would also allow for retirees to elect their representatives to the UUP Delegate Assembly and to serve on the NYSUT Retiree Council as every other chapter does from its constituency. The Retiree Chapter would also allow retirees to stay active at their campus chapters, on the statewide level and with the UUP affiliates.

WHAT WOULD THE STRUCTURE BE?

Currently, retirees are organized under two committees: COARM and RELAG

The full text of the proposed constitutional changes is in the December 2005 Voice

(Retiree Legislative Action Group). As such, committees can only recommend and the statewide Executive Board must approve. The new structure would create a chapter that would include officers and an executive board. The Retiree Chapter would have a president, vice president, secretary and treasurer.

The seven regional chairs and these officers would comprise the chapter executive board. The Retiree Chapter executive board would function just as the other chapter executive boards in UUP. It would follow the same guidelines, policies and regulations. The president, vice president, seven regional chairs and 14 other elected regional representatives would serve as delegates to UUP's Delegate Assembly.

WHAT ARE THE PROPOSED CHANGES?

The biggest proposed change is to organize the retirees within UUP as a chapter instead of a committee. This would allow retirees to decide how to function and what

to fund without gaining any other approvals, unlike committees that must receive approval. It would provide retirees with independence not

afforded to UUP committees.

As a chapter, all of the positions would be elected by retirees. The current structure includes a combination of appointments and elected representatives. The appointment of people onto COARM and RELAG needs the approval of the statewide Executive Board.

The chapter structure would also allow UUP retirees to fully participate in the NYSUT Retiree Council. Currently, UUP is entitled to nine seats on the council, but can only officially seat one. The change from committee to chapter would allow for more of a UUP presence within NYSUT and higher education retirees. Because UUP cannot negotiate for retiree benefits, it makes sense for retirees to work with NYSUT and its legislation department. As a retired New York state employee, all of the benefits and rights of retirees can only be changed or improved legislatively or constitutionally. This being the case, NYSUT has see **CHANGES**, page 7

Chair outlines reasons to support Retiree Chapter

By Judith Wishnia
COARM Chair

Recently, I received an e-mail from a dear and valued colleague, someone who had been instrumental in creating our union. He was not happy about the concept of a retiree chapter, worrying about loss of campus identity, control by NYSUT and perhaps a problem for professionals.

The following is what I wrote to him and perhaps my comments can answer some of your doubts:

We recognize that many retirees have deep attachments to their local chapters.

Thus, we arranged it so that retirees can essentially have dual membership: retiree chapter and local campus chapter. Each local campus chapter will have a retiree member on its executive board, and retirees can serve their local campuses on committees, even as chairs, and participate in all other activities. The only thing they cannot do is run for office from their local chapter.

This decision was made for two reasons: 1) People who are still working (we can call them actives or in-service or whatever) should be representing "active" members. Yes, retirees still care very much

about working conditions, etc. *But*, it is those who are experiencing the daily work day who are most able to represent the needs of active employees; and 2) on some campuses, especially those with small membership and hence a small number of delegates, retirees who have long-time name recognition are often elected as delegates, thereby preventing younger people from being elected. Yes, we built the union and our experience can still be used by the union, but it is time to allow the younger people to run the union.

Having a retiree chapter will strengthen see **CHAIR**, page 7

The Active Retiree

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Life as I see it ...

Aches and pains: true friends

I always enjoy people who say, "I woke up one morning and knew I was getting old" or "wow, she sure aged overnight – she has more wrinkles than a raisin." Hogwash. Growing old starts the minute you are born, which is one of the two instantaneous experiences we will have in life.

Being born is that event where one second you are doing a backstroke in amniotic fluid and the next second the dam breaks and some doctor yanks you out with a pair of forceps and starts smacking you around. Life can be cruel.

The aging process can shock you, especially when you see your first gray hair. It is not some little stump, but a real-life hair 14 inches long that did not happen overnight. That grey hair grew over a period of time and was careful to hide behind other dark hairs until the day you see it and scream.

Growing old is when you acquire aches and pains that a retiree wears like medals on a Marine's chest. This process starts the day you decide to "leap out of bed" – and nothing happens. The leaping mechanism has gone kaput, unfixable. The last time I tried to leap out of bed, I went back to sleep.

But as you age, aches and pains become



Geerken

old friends, always there, reminding you in the morning that you didn't die in your sleep.

Aches and pains are conversation starters. Can you picture two retirees meeting in the middle of a block and not being able to talk about aches and pains? The silence would be deafening.

But mention lumbago and you have a conversation for

hours, which can include the misunderstanding that Lumbago was the band leader that directed the Royal Canadians on New Year's Eve.

Retirees become very suspicious if we have a "pain free day" because we wonder when the other shoe will drop. We're not happy without our aches and pains. Aches and pains are there when you are lonely because the kids who promised to come for the weekend did not show up. You can count on aches and pains to be there every day and twice on Sunday.

And then there are pills of all sizes and colors that my wife puts into compartments with the days of the week on the cover, so I will not get confused. Confused? Why are there two Ts and two Ss?

Did I ever tell you about the pain I have in my ... ?

— **Henry Geerken, SUNY Cobleskill**

In memoriam

Let us take time to remember the UUP Active Retirees who have passed away:

Edward Becker, SUNY Stony Brook
 Susie Bemont, Binghamton
 Robert Boenig, Fredonia
 Paulline Bress, SUNY Buffalo
 Jarka Burian, Albany
 Richard Dunne, Canton
 Angelo Gatto, Brockport
 Philip Gerber, Brockport
 Roland Granger, Alfred
 Larry Green, Buffalo HSC
 Alan Haber, Binghamton
 Patrick Hall, Stony Brook HSC
 Donald Killoran, SUNY Stony Brook
 Eleonora Korzeniowska, Buffalo State

Robert MacCameron, ESC
 Kathleen Nuffer-Davis, Upstate Medical
 Andrew Pacioni, Buffalo State
 Dorothy Phillips, Buffalo State
 Stephen Rappaport, SUNY Stony Brook
 Robert Ribble, Brockport
 Ludwig Rimmner, Upstate Medical
 Michael Rorick, Albany
 Burton Sherman, Brooklyn HSC
 John Simeone, ESF
 Ronald Sorochin, Alfred
 Gordon Swartz, SUNY Buffalo
 Jeanne Vinicombe, SUNY Stony Brook
 Charles Woolever, Oneonta

From the committee chair

U.S. should take a lesson from France

By Judith Wishnia
COARM Chair

Even though I no longer teach, I still identify myself as a French historian and, as such, I travel to France once or twice a year to do some research and to see the union friends I made years ago while doing research for a book on the unionization of civil service workers.

Every time I go to Paris, I am always struck by the number of old people who walk the streets and ride the buses. French men and women have a longer life expectancy than we do in the U.S. and, hence, the proportion of citizens over 80 and 90 outstrips the U.S. The oldest woman in France (and possibly in the industrialized world) died a few years ago at 115!

How come one lives longer in France than in the U.S.? After all, don't they live on liver paté, runny cheese and red wine? Well, aside from the fact that cheese and wine are healthier than fast-food burgers and fries, there are more basic reasons for French good health.

First of all, the French have universal health insurance and thus — from infancy on — the population gets preventive

health care. Health problems are attended to *before* they become serious and, if there is illness, hospital care, tests and doctor visits are covered with a small co-pay. Prescription drugs cost a fraction of what they cost in the U.S., even lower than Canada. Advertising is not allowed (no “ask your doctor about the purple pill”) and price gouging is not allowed. Only a small profit is permitted.

As one gets older or infirm, home care is available. Under the government insurance program, health care workers will come to your home to help with bathing, feeding, etc. They will also take the old or infirm out for a walk so they will not become depressed about being housebound. Those recuperating from an illness or surgery, can go to rehabilitation centers. Finally, if one needs a nursing home, there is government sponsored long-term care. No wonder you can live to 115!

Of course, not all is peaches and cream. Two years ago, during a rare but severe heat wave in August, several thousand elderly citizens without air conditioning or fans, died.

Government officials and health care workers were slow to

respond because they were all on the traditional August vacation.

Speaking of vacations, there is another reason for French longevity. The French realize that workers need periodic rest and revitalization. French law mandates that all salaried workers get five weeks vacation each year. If you work for certain companies, you may also transfer overtime into vacation days. I know people who get six or seven weeks vacation. Dinner conversations frequently center on “where are you going” or “where have you been,” only after the food is appreciated, of course. Many companies and unions sponsor vacation resorts so workers do not have to spend a fortune on room and board. I once spent a superb week at a postal union resort on the Riviera for the cost of one night in a regular hotel. Some people split their vacation time between winter and summer, but I warn you, don't go to Paris in August. You will meet only tourists and have to eat in tourist restaurants. The French are all at the beach!

Holidays are also sacrosanct and if several holidays come near each other, such as May 1 (a *real* Labor Day) and May 8



Wishnia

(VE Day), vacation days are used to make yet another week of relaxation. Still, with all this relaxation, French production per worker is higher than in the U.S. Time off is healthy!

Unfortunately, some workers have more time off than they want. Unemployment is high, but the stress is alleviated because unemployed workers can get insurance for up to two years and the benefits are generous.

Obviously, as in the U.S., working parents face a good deal of stress but, once again, the government tries to alleviate the daily struggle. Workers are given four months of paid parental leave and government-see **FRANCE**, page 4

ARA meeting covers many ‘senior’ issues

By Judith Wishnia
COARM Chair

Right after Labor Day, Jo Schaffer (regional chair of the Southern Tier) and I attended the national conference of the Alliance for Retired Americans (ARA) in Washington, D.C.

ARA, a union-sponsored organization that includes numerous community groups as well as unions, has grown rapidly since its inception just a few years ago. It now has three million members and more than 800 retirees came to Washington to hear speak-

ers, attend workshops, rally and, most critically, to lobby Congress about maintaining Social Security as it now exists for retirees, the disabled and survivors. The speeches were excellent. New York Sen. Hillary Clinton topped a list of informative and inspiring speakers that included U.S. Rep. Charlie Rangel of New York and U.S. Sen. Debbie Stabenow of Michigan.

It is clear that the Bush administration wants to remove much of what we have gained since the New Deal. The mantra is “smaller government.” Well, this fall we

saw the result of smaller government: a weakened FEMA and a government that failed to protect the lives of hundreds of thousands of Americans caught by the ravages of hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

As for Social Security, many members of Congress told us that, what with Katrina and Iraq, Bush's plans to privatize Social Security will not come up this session. Polls indicate that the majority of Americans do not support privatization. After all, we may be old but we are not stupid!

see **ARA**, page 4

'Academic Bill of Rights' threatens higher ed

Although we are retired, most of us have spent our working lives supporting intellectual standards and academic freedom on our campuses.

Now there is a threat to the tradition of searching for the truth, allowing free and open discussion and allowing faculty to monitor hiring, tenure and curriculum. Claiming that conservative students have been punished for their views by left-leaning professors (an unproven assertion, David Horowitz, the arch conservative, has been advocating for a so-called "Academic Bill of Rights" (ABoR) that would (supposedly) insure that all points of view would be considered in hiring, granting tenure, teaching and curriculum. A version of ABoR has been inserted into the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act and — surprise, surprise — Trustee Candace de Russey is pushing for such a statement at SUNY.

While some of the language in the federal bill sounds innocuous — haven't universities always supported a learning atmosphere of diverse opinion — the implications are dangerous. Ohio's Bill 24 and the California version of ABoR demand that "individual curricula and reading lists in individual courses in the humanities and the sciences shall respect *all human knowledge* in that area." What that can mean is that a professor teaching "controversial" subjects such as evolution might be forced to give equal time to creationism, or a course on the Holocaust would have to discuss the theory that it never took place. Where is the search for truth?

It well might lead to hiring and tenure decisions based on "creating an atmosphere of diversity on campus." In other words, academics would be judged not on their teaching and research, but on whether they were liberals or conservatives. Trustee de Russey has already named a number of professors who oppose the Iraq war as unpatriotic and unfit to teach.

Most critically, it assumes that faculty do not know how to present arguments and encourage critical thinking, and it substitutes government dicta for faculty control: one more step on the road to thought control.

UUP, NYSUT, AFT and a host of other educational organizations are vigorously opposing this legislation on both the federal and state level.

We will keep you informed.

ARA ...

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All our rallies, our meetings, our lobbying and our letters have paid off. Even Republicans, thinking of the mid-term elections, are backing off. As I write this, it looks as if, indeed, Bush's plan is being put on the back burner. But do not be complacent. Bush really wants this and we must be ready to fight any "stealth" plans to privatize presented in some other form.

Another issue to worry about is the loss of private pension plans. As you know, Northwest

Airlines has dumped its pension plan on the federal government and there are fears that Delta and other companies will follow. If more and more private companies divest themselves of pension plans, the federal government will not have enough in its fund to pay full pensions. And if private companies can do this, state and federal governments may see this as a perfect opportunity to scrap their plans. So be alert.

We also have to be wary about what might be happening to Medicaid eligibility for long-term care in nursing homes. There are plans to make it more difficult (no homestead protection) to use Medicaid. We will keep an eye on that.

One of the more interesting issues discussed at the meeting was the future of universal health coverage. As you know, we

are the only industrialized country in the world (and even among developing countries) to be without universal health insurance. Currently, there are more than 45 million Americans without health insurance. It looks impossible to have Congress support this in the near future so activists in this field are turning to the states. This fall, there will be referenda on the ballots in two states, Massachusetts and Illinois, to have

inserted in the state constitution that every citizen has the right to health care. Maine is also working on this. The hope is that if enough states do this, most Americans will be assured of

health care and the federal government will be pressured to follow. As a former teacher of women's history, I am fascinated to note that this was how votes for women finally came about in 1920.

As UUPers, we are all members of the national and state ARA. Local chapters are being formed all over the country. If you want to work on these issues, contact the ARA. Even if you don't want to be active, you can subscribe to the "Friday Alert." This comes weekly via e-mail and provides information about what is new and/or interesting in the world of retiree politics. If you want to subscribe, go to www.retiredamericans.org or contact the Alliance for Retired Americans, 888 16th St. NW, Suite 520, Washington, D.C. 20006.

"I earned capital in the campaign, political capital, and now I intend to spend it."

—George W. Bush



FRANCE ...

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sponsored education starts at the nursery school level; 3- and 4-year-olds go to "écoles maternelles." Creches are also available for infants and younger children but places are at a premium. Once again, the government comes through with family allowances that aid in paying for a babysitter. After-school programs are available; during school vacations (every eight weeks), if parents are working, students are taken on field trips. In Paris and other cities, there are summer day camps for a small fee.

And now the education clincher: French universities charge only a nominal fee — no tuition!

Having told you all this, guess what? The right-wing government is trying to reduce social benefits. So when you read that the subway workers are on strike or the teachers are demonstrating in the streets, remember they are trying to maintain those benefits. The French may love American movies and popular music, and even Americans (not Bush), but they do not want to emulate our government's lack of social responsibility to its citizens.

Vive la France!

Social Security celebrates 70th birthday

By Donald Cohen
SUNY Albany

This past August 13, a very hot and sunny day, some 1,000 people gathered at the historic home of the late President Franklin Delano Roosevelt in Hyde Park, N.Y., to celebrate the 70th birthday of the Social Security Act.

This important gathering, arranged by NYSUT, included 500 union members, including four members from UUP's Capital District Region of COARM: Jim Kiepper, Hy Kuritz, Bill Reese and myself.

Shielded under a tent and several cooling fans to protect the gathering from a blazing sun, the program offered a testimonial to the memory of Frances Perkins, the key architect of the Social Security Act and the first woman to serve on FDR's presidential cabinet, as secretary of labor.

It was Perkins who, in 1935, first sold President Roosevelt on the fundamental idea that the federal government create an insurance program that would provide financial assistance to the poor, the elderly, the disabled and workers injured on the job — that no one should be locked into abject poverty. These were the core components of the Social Security Act. This was the same Perkins whose appointment was strongly opposed by William F. Green, then president of the American Federation of Labor ("She was never a union member"), as well as big business and a male-dominated Washington establishment.



DARRYL MCGRATH

It is not surprising that Perkins's Social Security imprint is most evident in Roosevelt's famous Four Freedoms Fireside Chat to the American people, proclaiming in 1941 his administration's aim to promote "Freedom from Want, Freedom of Speech and Expression, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom from Fear" as his agenda for the 20th century. All this was intended to raise hope and aspirations to a nation confronting its worst depression and greatest war in its history.

Another highlight of the recent birthday program was a debate between Paul Krugman, economics reporter and columnist for *The New York Times*, and Michel Tanner of the Cato Institute, a conservative think tank. Tanner's point was that Social Security needs a 22nd century remodeling to give young workers a better return when they retire; Krugman's rejoinder was that Social Security repre-

sents one of the most successful government insurance programs, and with minor revisions, can continue to be service-effective and fiscally sound.

A young college freshman sitting next to me, when asked about the Bush privatization plan, responded: "Suppose the stock market doesn't come through for me. Where is my protection for my hard-earned retirement investment?"

The Hyde Park celebration was also a personal and historical reconnection for me. As an 11-year-old, I remember my father — out of work for the first time in his life — went to work for the city of New York in the federal government's Works Progress Administration, an anti-poverty program to keep food on the table.

The Social Security celebration also brought back memories for me and my wife of two wonderful encounters with former first lady Eleanor Roosevelt, who often hosted afternoon-long discussions with a busload of teenagers (we had enrolled in an experimental summer teaching program) under her husband's old oak tree at the family home in Hyde Park.

Kuritz also revealed a happy reconnection at the Social Security celebration, as he quoted Arthur Schlesinger Jr.: "History is to a nation as memory is to an individual." (Read Kuritz's recollections below.)

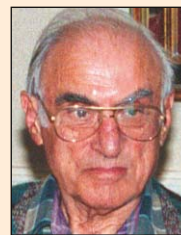
I thank NYSUT for its invitation on a day that reconnected history and personal memories for me.

Celebration brings back fond memories

A highlight for me at the Social Security celebration at Hyde Park was the opportunity to reunite with friends I had not seen for many years.

I was a graduate student at Columbia University from 1947 to 1953, at a time when the union movement in New York City was particularly strong. One of the most powerful was the Fur and Leather Workers, and some of that union's leaders became friends of mine.

It was exciting to meet one of them, Henry Foner, at Hyde Park. The last time I saw him was in 1957. We had a great time recalling old times and friends from those early days. Henry was an important leader in the labor movement, both as an organizer and educator. Today, in his mid-80s, he looked his old self, still active as president of The Paul Robeson

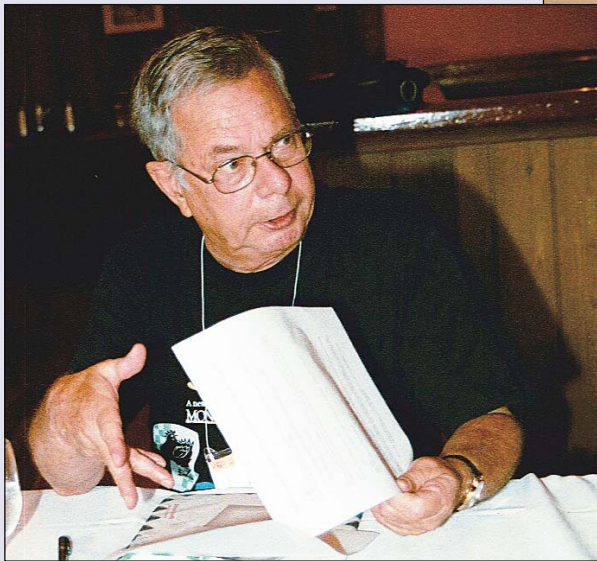


Kuritz

Foundation, writing articles for the labor press and participating in a variety of activities.

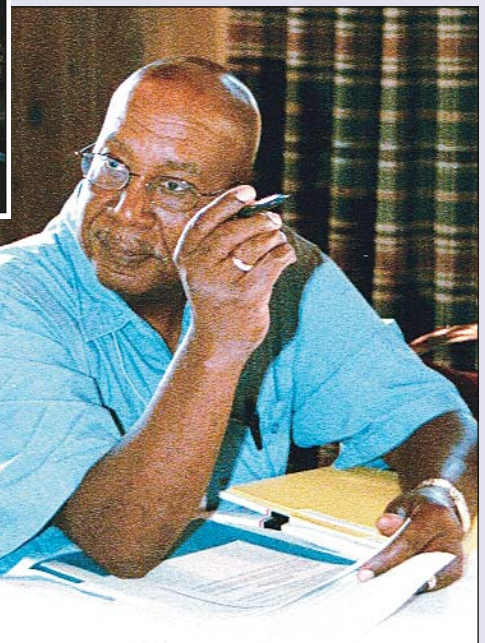
Being a part of this great event — celebrating the 70th birthday of Social Security and renewing my bond with union activists from my own early days — was a precious moment for me not to be forgotten very soon.

— Hyman Kuritz
SUNY Albany



DARRYL MCGRATH AND KAREN L. MATTISON PHOTOS

COARM meeting



COARM members spent a great deal of time during their meeting at the recent Fall Delegate Assembly discussing the details of the proposed Retiree Chapter. The statewide UUP Executive Board approved the language of a proposed constitutional amendment, which will be up for debate at the next DA, slated for Jan. 20-21 in Albany. Pictured, clockwise from top left, are: Bill Rock, Brockport; Jo Schaffer, Cortland; Horace Ivey, Upstate Medical University; Don Cohen, Albany; and COARM Chair Judy Wishnia, SUNY Stony Brook.

Hurricane victims still need union members' help

More than 15,000 AFT members were forced to evacuate their homes due to hurricanes Katrina and Rita, while hundreds of Florida AFTers also suffered losses as a result of Hurricane Wilma, which swept through South Florida in late October.

Months after the hurricanes, the plight of victims has faded from the headlines. But their need is greater than ever.

That's why UUP members are being asked to help with a tax-deductible donation to the AFT Disaster Relief Fund. This fund provides direct assistance to union members who

have suffered losses in these storms.

The AFT has committed to raising more than \$3 million to help fellow unionists in affected areas get back on their feet. Currently, the national federation has raised slightly more than \$600,000.

UUPers can make their tax-deductible donation online at <http://www.aft.org/katrina>. Note that the online form provides a field to indicate local/affiliate, so that donations will count toward a member's local or state campaign. Retirees can also send donations to: NYSUT Disaster Relief Fund, 800 Troy-Schenectady Road, Latham, N.Y. 12210. Contributions are then forwarded to the AFT.



CHANGES ...

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a proven track record as the best way for UUP retirees to make gains in such areas as COLA, health benefits and pensions.

WHAT WOULD REMAIN UNCHANGED?

- The chapter structure would continue with the seven regions (Capital District, Long Island, North Country, Western New York, Central New York, Metropolitan and Southern Tier) that are currently in place. The representatives would be elected from each region and there still would be a regional chair. These regions would also continue to sponsor events and activities;
- Retirees would be eligible to continue to participate on any committee in UUP, at both the local and statewide levels. Their appointment would follow the same process as for all members of UUP. The Retiree Chapter president could also make recommendations to the president of UUP;
- The collection of dues would happen in the same fashion. The financial monitoring would also continue as it is currently structured. It would be done with the UUP treasurer tracking the expenses made and approved by the Retiree Chapter;
- Current retiree benefits would not be affected by the proposed changes. Benefits would be handled separately through the UUP Benefit Trust Fund, NYSUT or AFT;

CHAIR ...

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the retirees rather than weakening them. It will give us more of a voice if we have a chapter. Retiree issues are rarely addressed at the local chapter and have tended to be forgotten by the union in general. As a chapter, we will have the same footing as any UUP chapter. We will also have more control over our activities than we did as a committee. As a committee, we had to get approval for every expenditure, for every regional meeting, etc. Even if we have a chapter, regional meetings will still take place as they have in the past.

I also want to address the question of "equality." COARM — and now if we have a chapter — does not distinguish between academics and professionals. Most of us do not even know what the members did before retirement. We are now all active retirees (note that we have proposed only one vice president.) Moreover, we do not have caucuses. We are one unit and whoever

• The Retiree Chapter president would serve as a nonvoting member of the statewide Executive Board. This would replace the chair of COARM on the statewide Executive Board;

• Retirees would be able to continue to fully participate in all NYSUT, AFT and AFL-CIO functions, events and conventions. They can be elected to attend the conventions as a NYSUT and/or AFT delegate from UUP; and,

• Retirees would still be able to continue in one of the most important roles — that of advocating on behalf of UUP, SUNY and public higher education.

WHAT ELSE WOULD BE NEW?

• In addition, the proposed constitutional amendment calls for a retiree representative at each chapter. This would be an appointed position and would be part of the chapter executive board.

• A new category of membership would be created — the "Retiree" category. It would no longer be listed as a sub-category of a Special Class of Membership, but as a category under Regular Membership.

• The Retiree Chapter would also be a sixth type of chapter.

The complete text of the proposed constitutional changes was printed in the December 2005 issue of *The Voice*.

er wants to run, can run.

As for NYSUT, yes we will sit on the retiree board with nine votes. I think this is a good thing because we can now bring higher ed issues to NYSUT retirees. (Since I wrote this, I have raised the question of the so-called "Academic Bill of Rights" and its threat to academic freedom to a NYSUT committee). However, one of the ways we differ from NYSUT is that we do not separate our retirees from their local chapters. That is why we specifically allowed dual membership and why, as a chapter, we will be *full* members of the Delegate Assembly with full voting rights.

Retirees can serve on UUP-wide committees, so if anyone wants to be on any committee, submit your name. The usual standard for election to NYSUT and AFT conventions remains. Anyone can run.

Please urge the delegates from your campus to vote in favor of the constitutional changes.

This and That

Western New York retirees to meet in Brockport

The spring luncheon of the Active Retirees of Western New York will be held at Fanny's Restaurant Tuesday, May 2, 2006. The event begins with coffee and registration at 10:30 a.m.

Mac Nelson, a professor of English at SUNY Fredonia, will address the group at 11 a.m. on "God and Wilderness on the Great Road."

Also on the agenda is Angie Shortino of Lifeline, who will discuss the "Implications of Federal Changes in Medicare for your Health Insurance."

Luncheon choices include chicken francaise, beef stroganoff, Boston scrod or pasta failla (vegetarian).

This is just a heads up so you may save the date. A formal invitation will be sent to all members in April.

The Oct. 24, 2006, meeting will be held at the Ramada Inn in Batavia.

— Bill Rock, Chair
Western New York Region

One click reaches all

To quickly learn about and discuss



Meirowitz

UUP and retiree issues via e-mail with your fellow retirees, join the UUP Retirees' Electronic Discussion List (e-list).

To post messages, you must first subscribe. It's all free, of course, and you may unsubscribe at any time. Once you've joined, write an e-mail, post it to the list, and everyone on the list will get your message via that one click.

Here's how to:

- Subscribe: uupretirees-subscribe@yahoogroups.com
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For more information, contact list moderator Claire Meirowitz of SUNY Old Westbury at (631) 422-6804 or at claire-m@att.net.

North Country

In the various positions in which I've served during my 30-plus years of UUP work, I've always tried to work from the grass roots, to listen to our members and then to propose ways to deal with concerns or interests. For that reason, in mid-September, I had a mailing sent from UUP to our small group of 160 UUP retirees from Canton, Potsdam and Plattsburgh.

The mailing was not a survey so much as a request for "thoughts" on several general issues — the proposal for a Retiree Chapter (the cover memo noted my strong reservations about the idea); health and other benefits; regional gatherings or other ways of seeing other retirees; current campus activities; and any other comments. Slightly more than a dozen replies were received. But when one considers that, at the beginning of this calendar year, only about four retired members contacted COARM about the Retiree Chapter proposal, the response is not a disappointment.

To those who responded, I offer my thanks, and to those who took the time to extend their comments on particular topics, additional thanks. Responses will continue to be welcome at any time, either by mail or by e-mail (or even in the Canton or Potsdam supermarkets, where I've had any number of good conversations about union issues in front of the meat counter).

The mailing asked for thoughts, so it wasn't intended to provide a base for statistical

statements. But some of the comments are worth noting here. On the question of a chapter, the ability to focus more on retiree issues was important to one member, while keeping the entire union aware and directly supportive of retiree concerns was another member's thought. One person suggested that there may be a way of working out a combination of status — in both retired and campus chapters. And involving out-of-state retirees should be addressed as well.

Some concerns were not new ones — our ongoing problem with dental and optical coverage, especially dental, is something that continues to evade solutions. Aside from high prescription co-pays, overall health insurance coverage seems satisfactory.

Various activities take place on the three campuses now — Plattsburgh's emeriti/ae lounge was featured in an issue of *The Active Retiree* last year; Canton has twice-yearly luncheons; and Potsdam has informal monthly luncheon get-togethers, with a college-sponsored luncheon in the fall. Canton and Potsdam retirees are also invited to a regional four-college (Clarkson and St. Lawrence are the others) luncheon once a year. One suggestion in the replies was to look at campus-based retiree structures to see if there could be some cooperative activities — forums or trips, for example. A suggestion for a three-campus function received mixed reactions, so that will wait

for additional responses.

I plan to assemble the full complement of thoughts (without names) for the statewide COARM or for anyone regionally who would like to see them.

In addition to the items on the questionnaire, I've had some preliminary discussion with leaders of the NYSUT/UUP North Country retiree group (covering Franklin and St. Lawrence counties) to see what might be worked out. In the first fall meeting of our regional Labor Council in October, I spoke with our council president about the Alliance for Retired Americans (ARA), thus far without a North Country presence. He said that it was only in the last month or two that he had been contacted by the state AFL-CIO about moving forward on this, and I volunteered to help as might be appropriate. Another retiree area in which I am potentially involved is an informal discussion among some statewide University Faculty Senate people about the role of emeriti/ae faculty in the University. (I serve the UFS as its parliamentarian.)

I'm still trying to work out the logistics of being a North Country rep, while also serving as a statewide committee member, but other COARM members and our own members "fer in the north contree," as Chaucer wrote, have been very helpful.

— Ed Alfonsini
SUNY Potsdam

Southern Tier

There was a Southern Tier regional meeting held Sept. 19, just outside of Greene, N.Y. All campus chapters in the region were represented. Guest speaker was Judith Wishnia, statewide chair of COARM, who spoke on the need to protect Social Security, as well as the recent Alliance for Retired Americans (ARA) conference and other issues relevant to retirees.

The fall emeriti luncheon on the SUNY Cortland campus was scheduled for Nov. 5. This group meets semi-annually: the fall program is hosted by the campus president; the spring by



COARM, which plans both events. Professor Robert Spitzer, political science, is the scheduled speaker. His topic

is "The Bush Presidency at the Crossroads."

At her campus, Schaffer celebrated the 70th anniversary of the founding of Social Security with a big Social Security Card birthday cake for the campus Labor Day Welcome picnic.

Schaffer is involved with the Central New York ARA, a very active chapter with across-the-board union representation. At left, Schaffer, right, and COARM Chair Wishnia attend the national conference of ARA held in Washington, D.C., in early September.

— Jo Schaffer, SUNY Cortland

MEETINGS

Central New York

Newly elected, and new to retiree issues, I was fortunate that Horace Ivey — a long-time retiree activist — assisted me with the transition into office, offering support and suggestions on myriad topics. His historical knowledge of COARM was particularly important at this juncture because of the concerns some CNY retirees expressed about the proposed changes in the retiree structure — an issue about which I had only peripheral knowledge.

Members also had questions about the requisite changes needed in UUP's constitution — and so I called a meeting of retiree activists to understand their thinking on this issue. We met at UUP's Syracuse office at the end of May, before the "official" start of my term.

The consensus of those present at the meeting was that a change might be needed, but the proposal seemed like too much, and was happening too quickly. Some questioned why anything needed fixing, as nothing seemed broken. Some activists, on the other hand, believed that retired members should not vote on issues that impact active members and wholly supported the proposed constitutional change.

I was asked to convey the suggestions and questions raised at the meeting to COARM Chair Judy Wishnia, along with a sugges-

tion that a survey be sent asking retirees what their expectations were of UUP in their retirement years.

The questions and concerns of CNY's retiree activists pointed to the need to hold a regional meeting as soon as possible for additional dialogue and to get a better read on concerns from a broader representation of members on morphing into a UUP chapter.

On July 26, a Central New York regional COARM "Early Bird Dinner" Reunion meeting was held in Syracuse, with representation from three of the five campuses in the CNY region.

Greetings were read from UUP President Bill Scheuerman, who sent congratulations on the meeting and offered that, "If there is anything the UUP Administrative Office can do to assist you (our regional retirees) in any way, please don't hesitate to call."

There was a spirited discussion on the dissolution of COARM — which was informative — but still left specifics unanswered, including questions on the management of retiree funds and how operationally the Retiree Chapter would function.

Most members agreed intellectually with the proposition that retired members should not vote, or have a disproportionately high level of input on items that affect the terms

and conditions of those currently employed by SUNY. Some of us, myself included, had withdrawn from serving as officers at the chapter level because we recognized that — without daily contact with members, and without being part of the campus workforce — our knowledge of the culture of the campus and issues is more and more historical, rather than timely.

At the end of the evening's discussion, most present agreed wholeheartedly with moving ahead to form a Retiree Chapter — but they wanted to see the final constitutional language and a set of bylaws governing the new chapter.

Meanwhile, the CNY region will hold a holiday gathering this month. We will discuss the proposed constitutional amendment to create a Retiree Chapter, as the language is finished and the proposed amendment was approved by the union's statewide Executive Board in late October.

We'll also use the occasion to honor Horace Ivey for his service to UUP's retirees and the broader community.

Our guest speaker, UUP's rock star — President Scheuerman — will guarantee a lively and intellectually engaging evening and will certainly insert some of his well-known humorous asides.

— *Barbara Silverstone*
Upstate Medical University

Western New York

Fifty-four attendees to the Active Retirees of Western NY fall meeting held on the SUNY Brockport campus Oct. 18 heard a morning program, where Lisa Arrington — an associate at Lacy, Katzen, LLP, in Rochester — presented a wealth of information on eldercare legal issues.

Explaining numerous details — such as the Medicaid spending-down rules, gifting and the role of trusts — Arrington helped even those who were knowledgeable review these vital issues. The many questions attested to both the fact that this was a complex topic and that it also was of considerable interest to attendees.



Western New York COARM Chair Bill Rock, left, poses with guest speakers Lisa Arrington and Morris Beers.

The afternoon program featured Morris Beers, a distinguished service professor and Chancellor's Teaching Award honoree from the department of education and human development at Brockport. He presented a PowerPoint program on Southeast Australia and New Zealand. Beers took his pictures during his 2003 sabbatical when he was researching online instruction. As others who have visited this area can attest, Beers' pictures showed what a great pleasure and learning experience it is to travel through these very beautiful lands.

— *Pat Baker*
Secretary

REGIONAL MEETINGS

Capital District

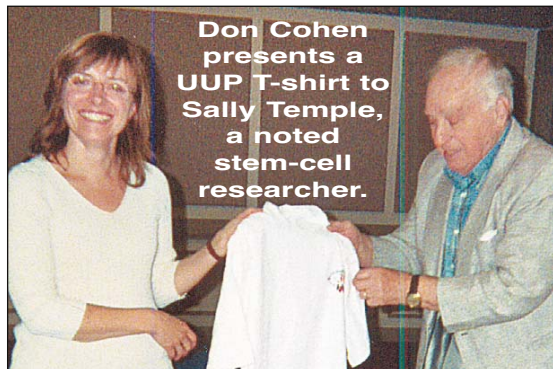
The annual fall meeting of the Capital District region of COARM was held Sept. 28 at the Beverwyck Retirement Community Center, which hosted the event in its beautiful complex that included a guest luncheon and a tour at the end of the program.

Two special guests headlined the four-hour program, which opened with a "Swap Shop" that serves as a warm-up for a formal program in which members are encouraged to share thoughts and experiences relating to an announced theme. For this meeting, the theme was "The Power of Reconnection," moderated by Francine Frank.

The leadoff guest speaker was Sally Temple, a gifted young microbiologist at Albany Medical College, who is the only researcher experimenting with embryonic stem cells in the Capital District. In fact, Temple was honored as the first scientist to show how stem cells could be cultured and grown outside the human body.

Temple's presentation, entitled "Stem Cells: Their Origin and Application," provided a fascinating firsthand introduction to this new frontier of biological and medical science. Temple's current investigation of stem cell treatment possibilities for the problem of macular degeneration is a collaboration with her husband, Dr. Stern, a practicing ophthalmologist.

ANNIE MARINE



Our luncheon guest was professor emeritus Alvin Magid, a political scientist at SUNY Albany, and recipient of a number of major grants that have underwritten his guest professorships, lectures, research and publications based on extensive experiences in nine different countries.

Magid's challenging presentation focused on China and on what he dubbed that country's version of the Monroe Doctrine, one in which they are building a solid economic and political network of ties that will establish their growing hegemony in Asia and as a world power.

Among the communications that were shared at the meeting included a report by Bill Reese, whose committee met recently with new SUNY Albany President Kermit Hall, who assured the

committee he is in favor of an Emeriti Center for retired professionals and academics on the Albany campus. Related to this development was a chapter resolution made by the Capital District region and passed by COARM at the recent Delegate Assembly, recommending that UUP propose to the chancellor that Emeriti Centers be established at *all* SUNY campuses.

Hy Kuritz reported on the recent Social Security 70th birthday celebration (see related article, page 5), and the New York State Alliance for Retired Americans's (NYSARA) ongoing advocacy effort to thwart privatization of Medicare and Social Security.

Anne Marine, UUP coordinator of retiree services, reminded members to support VOTE/COPE. She also reported that a new vendor, Empire Blue Cross/Caremark, will take over the prescription drug program from Express Scripts, with no change in benefits. The latter will be reported to the full membership.

Mention was also made of Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita relief efforts and NYSUT's call for donations. To give, send your donations to: NYSUT Headquarters, attn. Accounting, 800 Troy-Schenectady Road, Latham, N.Y. 12110.

— Don Cohen, SUNY Albany

Long Island

On Thursday, Oct. 20, I attended the UUP Farmingdale Chapter meeting. The purpose of my speaking to the members was to discuss the many benefits available to them.

One benefit in particular — Assist America — provides coverage when traveling 100 miles or more from home to anywhere in the world. The program, at no cost to union members, includes:

- guaranteed hospital admission;
- emergency evacuation to a medical facility;
- medically supervised return travel to your home;
- prescription replacement;

- medical consultation and evaluation;
- referrals to Western-trained, English-speaking medical providers; and
- care and transport of unattended minor children.

I also discussed catastrophe major medical insurance, which is available through NYSUT Member Benefits.

Catastrophe insurance supplements basic hospitalization and major medical insurance, including Medicare, as well as long-term care insurance.

After the deductible has been met, the plan pays up to 100 percent of eligible expenses not covered by other insurance,

for up to five years or \$2 million.

The plan includes a \$25,000 deductible, and members have three full years from the date their first eligible expense is incurred to satisfy this deductible. All reasonable and customary eligible expenses count toward the deductible, including those paid by a member's basic health insurance policy, as well as those paid out of pocket.

Information on all union benefit programs is available from UUP at (800) 342-4206 or online at www.uupinfo.org.

— Pearl Brod
SUNY Farmingdale

Homeowner Tips for Surviving Freezing Weather

Heavy snow and bitter cold can lead to serious problems for property owners, including frozen pipes and home fires. To help ride out the winter's storms, MetLife® Auto & Home offers a free brochure, "Surviving Severe Cold Weather," which explains how to avoid much of the distress and inconvenience that winter weather can bring. The brochure is available by calling MetLife at 800-638-5433.

"The best defense is preparation," explained Bob Smith, Vice President and Chief Claim Officer of MetLife Auto & Home. "Most winter insurance claims that we receive are related to frozen pipes and downspouts, ice dams on roofs, and frozen tree limbs that fall on vehicles and homes. Experience has shown us that some of these problems could have been prevented, which is why it's important to take precautions to ensure the safety of your property and, most importantly, your loved ones."

Tips to avoid damages from winter weather:

- Keep sidewalks and entrances to your home free from ice and snow.
- Keep the house heated to a minimum of 65 degrees.
- Keep cupboard doors open below sinks.
- Turn on hot and cold faucets enough to let them drip slowly.
- Identify the location for the main water shutoff in your home.
- Keep garage doors closed.
- Remove dead tree branches that could damage your house.
- Close flues in fireplace when not in use.



In addition, according to the National Fire Prevention Association, nearly two-thirds of all residential fires occur during the winter months. From too many lights plugged into an outlet to a portable-heating device placed too close to curtains or a blanket, there are many opportunities for a fire to start. Many of these fires could be prevented simply by considering some basic issues of home fire safety. To help property owners rekindle their knowledge of the basics, MetLife Auto & Home offers a free brochure called "Up in Smoke!," which is also available by calling 800-638-5433.

MetLife Auto & Home is endorsed by New York State United Teachers Member Benefits. For free, no-obligation auto and home* insurance quotes that include special group rates**, call 800-GET-MET 1 (800-438-6381). Please have your current policies on hand when calling.

* Home insurance is available in most states to those who qualify.

** Available in most states to those who qualify.

Coverage, underwritten by MetLife Auto & Home, is available in most states to those who qualify. In Texas, real property policies are provided by Metropolitan Lloyds Insurance Company of Texas, Irving, TX. In Texas, auto policies are provided by either Metropolitan Property and Casualty Insurance Company, Metropolitan General Insurance Company, Metropolitan Casualty Insurance Company, Metropolitan Direct Property and Casualty Insurance Company, all of Warwick, RI, or GAINSCO County Mutual Insurance Company, Fort Worth, TX, through an arrangement with Metropolitan Property and Casualty Insurance Company. In some instances, special arrangements for coverage have been made with other carriers.

MetLife Auto & Home is a brand of Metropolitan Property and Casualty Insurance Company and its Affiliates, Warwick, RI. L0301CV0U(exp0107)MPC-LD

For information about this program or for information about contractual expense reimbursement/endorsement arrangements with endorsed providers, please call NYSUT Member Benefits at 800-626-8101, e-mail benefits@nysutmail.org, or visit www.memberbenefits.nysut.org.

Empire Plan urges enrollees to reject Medicare Part D

The New York State Department of Civil Service (DCS) recently mailed a notice urging those enrolled in the New York State Health Insurance Program (NYSHIP) *not* to participate in a Medicare Part D prescription plan.

According to DCS, NYSHIP enrollees or covered dependents eligible for Medicare “should consider joining a Medicare prescription drug plan *only* if (they) are eligible for extra help provided by the Medicare Part D Low Income Subsidy.” Those who qualify for Social Services or Medicaid may fall into this category, as well as those for whom the NYSHIP prescription co-pays are a hardship.

Also from DCS:

- NYSHIP provides prescription drug coverage to you and your covered dependents through the Empire Plan or a NYSHIP health maintenance organization (HMO).
- Effective Jan. 1, 2006, Medicare will begin providing prescription drug coverage to those who join a Medicare Part D pre-

scription drug plan. You may receive information and notice advertising these plans.

- Most NYSHIP enrollees and covered dependents should not enroll in a Medicare prescription drug plan.
 - The prescription drug benefits provided under your NYSHIP coverage, in most cases, gives you better coverage and lower out-of-pocket costs than the coverage offered under a Medicare prescription drug plan.
 - NYSHIP does not require that you join Medicare Part D for prescription drug coverage.
 - As a NYSHIP enrollee or covered dependent eligible for Medicare in 2006, you will continue to receive the full NYSHIP prescription drug benefits available to you under the Empire Plan or an NYSHIP HMO if you do not enroll in Medicare Part D.
- If you should enroll in a Medicare prescription drug plan:**
- You will not be reimbursed the monthly premium for Medicare Part D prescrip-

tion drug coverage, as you are for the premium for Medicare Part B medical coverage.

- There will be changes in your NYSHIP prescription drug coverage and the way you receive prescription drug benefits.
- Your NYSHIP prescription drug coverage will become secondary. The Medicare prescription drug plan will be primary.
- You will continue to be billed the full NYSHIP monthly premium, which includes the cost of NYSHIP prescription drug coverage.

For more information:

- Refer to your plan documents or contact the Empire Plan Prescription Drug Program toll-free at 1-877-7-NYSHIP or your HMO to learn more about your NYSHIP prescription drug coverage.
- Call the Empire Plan and select Option 1 for further details about how the Medicare Part D prescription drug coverage relates to your NYSHIP coverage.

Albany, N.Y. 12212-5143

P.O. Box 15143

United University Professions

The Active Retiree 