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R. I. AFT / R THOUGHTS

"Rally for Respect" One Retiree's Perspective

On June 1st, this retiree attended the "Rally for Respect" held at the R.I. State House. It was one of the most energizing events I have attended.

Approximately 4,000 union members from all walks of life united as one union to protest the Governor's attack on public employee bargaining rights, unfair pension cuts, and the slow progress in negotiations that both state workers and certain teachers' unions are experiencing.

Local unions brought their members in by the busloads, the Firefighter's Bag Pipers played upbeat and sometimes haunting songs, brothers and sisters from various locals sought out long time friends and acquaintances and lovingly embraced. The atmosphere was electric and carnival like, but with a definite purpose.

Speakers continued to energize the crowd with the most fiery speech being given by labor historian and URI professor Scott Malloy.

As Professor Malloy spoke, tears welled up in my eyes as I reflected

upon what RI teachers' unions have endured throughout the state to achieve fair and equitable contracts.

As a former Vice-President and Executive Board member of the Pawtucket Teachers' Alliance, Local 930, I saw friends and colleagues endure jail. I remember being in the court room and seeing the judge sentence my friends and co-workers for defying a court ordered injunction, which the school committee used against teachers as a bargaining tool.

Standing in the midst of Local 930, shoulder to shoulder with some with whom I had walked many a strike line and with other younger teachers who had never walked a line, it became clearer to me than ever before, I'm here because I truly believe in unions.

Of late, RI unions have been vilified by former CEO and present Governor Donald Carcieri.

United workers should work to prevent hostile government officials from being placed into positions where they are allowed to put

their interests before the welfare of workers.

I know from my own experience as a retired teacher, that unions make people's lives better and more secure.

Where unions exist, workers achieve higher wages and better benefits, crime rates are lower, there is less poverty, and workplaces are safer!

I urge all retirees to remain active in union work. Participate at whatever level is comfortable for you.

This year there was a bill submitted to cut current retirees' COLA benefits. We may face this possibility again next year. The union needs your support so that this does not happen!

Leslie Chouinard

Note: The "Rally for Respect" was organized by Working Rhode Island, which is a coalition of 120,000 active and retired union workers of which the AFT is a member.

Website:
www.workingri.com

Pension Changes 101

Recently the General Assembly passed Gov. Carcieri's draconian pension bill which has the following elements for teachers and state employees who currently have fewer than 10 years of contributory service (purchased years do not count) and any future hires:

- Institution of minimum retirement age: 59 after 29 years of service or 65 after 10 years of contributory service,
- Maximum pension: 75% after 38 years,
- COLA – Consumer Price Index or 3%, whichever is lower.

Governor Carcieri has consistently expressed his distaste for

public employees and teacher unions, yet he has failed to publicly mention some of the reasons why the pension system needed adjustment.

- A) During the state's banking crisis of 1990-1992, the state deferred its 87 million dollar contribution to the pension fund while state employees and teachers continued to contribute.
- B) The state failed to add money to the pension fund when early retirement benefits were extended during Governor DiPrete's administration (\$229 million 1989-1990)
- C) The value of the portfolio was greatly exaggerated under State Treasurer Nancy

Mayer by manipulating evaluation procedures.

RI employee contributions are among the highest in the country, with teachers contributing 9.5% and state workers paying 8.75% of their salaries.

Unfortunately, the news media rarely found these facts news worthy while reporting on the current round of pension reform!

Leslie Chouinard

NYC Bus Trip

The R.I. AFT/R is heading to the Big Apple for a fun day out.

Deadline is October 5th!

See the website or call Kenn Fontaine for details.

New Member Breakfast

The R.I. AFT/R is holding its 2005-2006 New Member Welcome Breakfast.

Deadline is September 7th!

See the website or call Kenn Fontaine for details.

Website

The R.I. AFT/R now has a web page on the RIFTHP website. All information provided in mailings will be available online, along with relevant articles and a list of upcoming events.

Go to:

www.RIFTHP.org
and click on the
RI AFT/R link

R.I. AFT/R

2005-2006 Tentative Calendar

Tuesday, September 13, 2005

New Member Breakfast
Crowne Plaza Hotel, Warwick

Wednesday, October 12, 2005

N.Y. City Bus Trip

Tuesday, November 15, 2005

R.I. AFT/R Board Meeting
RIFTHP Board Room

Thursday, December 8, 2005

R.I. AFT/R Holiday Party
Lincoln Park,
Chairman's Lounge

Tuesday, January 17, 2006

R.I. AFT/R Board Meeting
RIFTHP Board Room

Tuesday, February 28, 2006

Foxwoods Casino

Tuesday, March 21, 2006

R.I. AFT/R Board Meeting
RIFTHP Board Room

Wednesday, April 5, 2006

N.Y. City Bus Trip

Wednesday, May 17, 2006

Business Meeting/
Luncheon
West Valley Inn,
West Warwick

Tuesday, June 6, 2006

R.I. AFT/R Board Meeting
RIFTHP Board Room

Thousands of AFT Members Affected by Katrina

Several thousand AFT members and their families are among those affected by the devastation of Hurricane Katrina, which slammed into the Gulf Coast on Monday. While reports are still coming in, thousands of homes and businesses have been ruined or damaged by flooding, wind or tornadoes. In addition, essential services, including clean water and sanitation, have been disrupted, and power companies report that nearly 3 million customers are without power.

Schools and colleges are closed in many parts of Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi, as well as the Florida panhandle and some parts of South Florida, where the hurricane passed through three days earlier.

AFT secretary-treasurer Nat LaCour, former president of the United Teachers of New Orleans,

and his family were in Baton Rouge, La., at the time the hurricane hit, and because access to the city is virtually impossible, he is still unable to assess possible damage to his home in New Orleans or to get reports on how AFT affiliates, members and staff have been affected.

Efforts to reach the Mississippi AFT affiliate based in Gulfport, as well as other locals in the state, were unsuccessful due to disruptions in both land lines and cell phone communications.

AFT southern regional director Al Squire has been in touch with some affiliates in Alabama and said that although most AFT



offices there did not sustain serious damage, electricity is still out in a number of places and communications are difficult. The president of the Mobile chapter, Joe Brantley, reports that the union office is without power or water because of downed trees. Mobile schools are not expected to open until the Tuesday after Labor Day, if then, he says.

AFT affiliates and members can help by making contributions to the AFT Disaster Relief Fund, which provides small grants to AFT members who are victims of natural disasters. Contributions should be made payable to the AFT with "disaster relief" written in the



memo portion of the check and sent to:

AFT Disaster Relief Fund
Attn: Connie Cordovilla
555 New Jersey Ave. N.W.
Washington, DC 20001



RHODE ISLAND
FEDERATION OF TEACHERS
AND HEALTH PROFESSIONALS
AFT, AFL-CIO



A Union of Professionals
AFT ER&D
A Professional Development Program

QuEST '05

Save the Date

Mark your calendars now.

Plan to attend the RIFTHP's
biennial QuEST conference:

October 28th & 29th
Westin Hotel, Providence

QuEST is the RIFTHP's biennial professional issues conference attracting hundreds of RI teachers, union leaders and guests. QuEST features workshops, seminars and general sessions on important and timely educational issues with lots of opportunities to share best practice, debate issues and receive important information.

Don't miss this chance to attend one of the area's best professional development opportunities with workshops and seminars on:



Special Ed Updates....What's required under the new IDEA?



Bullying & Classroom Management....How to create a climate conducive to learning.



Demonstrating Proficiency....Portfolios, Exhibitions, Common Tasks...How do they help us know what kids have learned?



Literacy, Literacy, Literacy...At all levels....What works?



Keeping the Arts and Electives Alive....How can we hold on to the Arts and Electives in this climate of Accountability?



IPLANS, New Certification Requirements, HQT.....What you need to know.....

And much, much more...

Check out our website www.rifthp.org this summer for information, look for registration materials in the fall, and join us in October for QuEST '05