



The Advocate

Nearing the Finish Line: One Generation's Triumphs and Defeats

*"...at my back I always hear/
Time's winged chariot hurrying
near."
("To His Coy Mistress," Andrew
Marvell)*

I have recently been reading a wonderfully funny memoir by Bill Bryson called The Life and Times of the Thunderbolt Kid (Broadway Books, 2006) wherein he describes his life as a child growing up during the 1950s in Des Moines, Iowa. Many of the activities, images, and recollections coincide with my own and, I suspect, most of the "Boomer" generation, a halcyon time when life was wonderful if one were white, young, and possessed of employed, doting parents who had survived World War II. Bryson says:

By 1951, when I came sliding down the chute, almost 90 percent of American families had refrigerators, and nearly three-quarters had washing machines, telephones, vacuum cleaners, and gas or electric stoves—things that most of the rest of the world could still only fantasize about. Americans owned 80 percent of the world's electrical goods, controlled two-thirds of the world's productive capacity, produced more than 40 per-

cent of its electricity, 60 percent of its oil, and 66 percent of its steel. The 5 percent of people on Earth who were Americans had more wealth than the other 95 percent combined. (5)

Today, as our generation is nearing retirement, this country and this planet are far different places. All of us in every occupation and/or walk of life have contributed to the changes. We've made great strides in many areas and egregious mistakes in others. Here are a few to be considered: our triumphs and defeats, our legacy, for good or ill, we leave our children and grandchildren.



At this point I'll turn the discussion to my good friend, Dr. Robert Miller, who is much smarter and much better at synthesis than I am. Pat Gray

Random Notes on Nearing the Finish Line

I was born in 1943, two years before the "boomer" generation was officially conceived. As a "war baby," I am not technically a member of this generation, but then I don't belong to the

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“greatest generation” that preceded it (although several of my older siblings do). However, my youth did encompass the fifties and early sixties, though by the time campus “unrest” got started in opposition to the Vietnam war, I was already a college teacher.

Yes, there have been enormous changes since the fifties, some of which we can all be proud, such as the expansion of civil liberties, the conquest of disease and its concomitant extension of the quality of life, and the enormous expansion of scientific understanding and technical know-how, but many of the changes over the past fifty years are troubling to say the least. I look at my thirteen-year-old daughter and wonder if her life will be better than mine has been, and I worry. What has our generation wrought?

The following serious problems, challenging an optimistic assessment of the boomer years and the group’s legacy, have emerged over the past half century: population expansion, massive debt, major changes in the family unit, religious fundamentalism, educational stagnation, and, the proverbial elephant in the room, global warming (I am leaving out many other problems, such as environmental degradation and energy depletion, and not the least of which is the one that may do us all in sooner or later—The Bomb). A thorough discussion of these looming difficulties would require volumes, as well as expertise I do not have. The following are presented as accumulated random notes:

Population. The population of the United States today (as of 10 February 2007) is 301,141,155 . That is more than double the population of 1950, at 150,520,798. In 1950, there were 2,556,518,868 people on earth; in 2007, the total has risen to 6,605,046,992. The estimated population of



the US in 2050 is 392,000,000; the earth’s population will rise to 9,404,296,384. While birth rates have been declining, particularly in developed countries—for example the US fertility rate (births per woman) peaked about 1957 and had declined to about the replacement rate of 2.11 by 2001—the overall US and global population continues to rise. As we have seen in our own little corner of the globe, increased population leads to congestion, pollution, and resource depletion.

Debt. The outstanding US public debt, as of 10 February 2007 at 12:03:11 GMT, was \$8,716,195,865,495.82. It continues to grow. Along with Loren Steffy, business columnist for the *Houston*



Chronicle, I wonder how long the Chinese and the Japanese will continue to fund our extravagance. The public debt in 1950 stood at 257.4 billion.

The Family. In 1960, 70% of women aged 20-24 were married. By 1998, the number had declined to 24% according to “By the Numbers” (*Scientific American*, December 1999). Further, only 67% of women aged 35-44 were married in 1998 as opposed to 81% between 1890 and 1940. In 1890, there were 107 males for every 100 females in the 20-to-44-year-old group, but in 2002, the ratio had dropped to 98 per 100. (“A Surplus of Women.” Rodger Doyle. *Scientific American*. April 2004). Divorce rates more than doubled from 1966 to 1979. As Laura Kipnis points out in a review in *The Atlantic Monthly* in June 2005, “the 1950s era male-breadwinner, stay-at-home-mom family arrangement” was “quite a short-lived affair, reigning supreme for a brief twenty-year period before it fell apart in the 1970s” (88). She concludes: “The meaning of marriage is being transformed as a result of seismic shifts, the roles of men and women are being transformed, and everyone is scrambling to wrest some personal happiness out of the situation” (88). In addition, Andrea Georgsson, in “Girls’ Futures Hitting Marriage Brick Wall,” in the *Houston Chronicle* (6-14-04), cites the following statistics:



“According to figures compiled by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, more than 80,000 girls in Texas aged 15 to 19 got pregnant in 2000. In 2001, more than 1,000 girls younger than 15 gave birth” (16 A). And then there is the following observation by Caitlin Flanagan in a controversial article in *The Atlantic Monthly* (January/February 2006)—“Are You There God? It’s Me, Monica: How Nice Girls Got so Casual about Oral Sex.” She concludes this article by saying:

And here are America’s girls: experienced beyond their years, lacking any clear message from the adult community about the importance of protecting their modesty, adrift in one of the most explicitly sexualized cultures in the history of the world .(182)

Religious Fundamentalism. Everyone is quite aware of the rise of Islamic fundamentalism and the problems it poses for the world community. Less militant, perhaps, but closer to home, is the continued attack on reason and science mounted by American fundamentalists of various stripes. We are a religious nation, which is not always a progressive thing. For example, in a 2005 Poll conducted by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 42 % of Americans agreed with the statement that “living things have existed in their present form since the beginning of time.” Further, while 48% said that humans had evolved, 18% of that group felt that evolution was “guided by a supreme being.” Further, 64% said they were open to teaching creationism in addition to evolution (*Houston Chronicle*. 31 August 2005). More recently, the *Houston Chronicle* reported that a creationist account of the formation of the Grand Canyon is being sold in the National Park bookstore there. The account says that the earth was created in 6 days about 6,000 years ago (14 January 2007). Not to be left behind, Texas has its own Creation Evidence Museum just outside Glen Rose—where there are fossilized dinosaur tracks. Its brochure says that it is “a chartered

scientific non-profit museum” established in 1984. The Creation Evidence Museum holds to “A recent special creation by the personal Creator” and a “literal six-day creation.” The perspective appears to be widening. *The Chronicle* recently reported (on 8 February of 2007) that a display of the famous “Turkana Boy” in Nairobi is being opposed by the evangelical religious movement there. Bishop Boniface Adoyo declares: “I did not evolve from Turkana Boy or anything like it” (A 16).

Education. In January 2001, national scores showed that only 1 in 5 high school seniors had a solid grasp of science and only one-half could explain simple scientific principles. In 2003, Neil Peirce reported in the *Houston Chronicle* that US employers reported two-thirds of job applicants were seriously deficient in basic reading and math. Also in 2003, the *Chronicle* reported that the average annual cost for a student at Texas A&M was \$12, 500; at UT Austin it was \$11,400, and at Baylor it was \$15,700. Ivy League? Dartmouth at \$27,000. In May of 2006, the *Chronicle* reported that college applicants’ average scores on the verbal and math sections of the SAT fell significantly, some by more than 10 points. In January of this year, the *Chronicle* reported that the TEA was claiming a high school graduation rate of 84 %, but that “the consensus among researchers” was that the rate was 20 points lower. On January 31 2007, the *Chronicle* further reported that UT Austin had a graduation rate of 75% **in 6 years** (my emphasis), while A&M’s rate (also 6 years) was 77% and the University of Houston’s was 40%. Finally, after fifty years, with at least 25 years of public hand-wringing over the state of public education in the US, things don’t appear to have changed much. *The Atlantic*’s State of the Union section, in its Jan-Feb 2007 issue, reports that the amount of money spent per pupil went from just over \$ 4,000 in 1970 to \$10,000 in 2003.





At the same time, the student-teacher ratio went from 22:1 to 16:1 while the number of public school teachers with a Master’s degree went from 27% to 57%. Yet the average standardized test scores for all students across the US have stayed remarkably flat. One final note: in a 2003 article in *The Atlantic*, Matthew Miller reported that in 1970 in New York City a lawyer starting out at a big law firm and a teacher going into public education had a difference of only \$2,000 in their salaries. Today it is \$145,000 versus \$40,000.

Global Warming. I don’t need to say much here; the headlines will do: “Global Warming Skeptics are Liars, Pure and Simple.” Paul Krugman. *Houston Chronicle* (5 June 2006); “Ice Shows Greenhouse Gas Levels Highest in 650,000 Years.” *Houston Chronicle* (25 November 2005)—about ice cores taken from the Antarctic. Michael Shermer, editor of *Skeptic Magazine* and columnist for *Scientific American*, in a June 2006 article discussed his conversion, by the “data,” to a believer in “anthropogenic global warming.” James Hansen, one of the first climatologists to raise the warning flag about global warming, wrote an article in *Scientific American* called “Defusing the Global Warming Time Bomb” (March 2004). The byline reads: “Global Warming is Real, and the Consequences are Potentially Disastrous.” In an October 2003 article in *Scientific American* called “Meltdown in the North,” the byline reads: “Sea ice and glaciers are melting, permafrost is thawing, tundra is yielding to shrubs—and scientists are struggling to un-



derstand how these changes will affect not just the Arctic but the Entire Planet.”

In “Reasons for Hope,” the last chapter of his book, *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*, Jared Diamond mentions two choices that humans must make if our civilization is to succeed. He says:

On reflection, we can also recognize the crucial role of these same two choices for the outcomes of our individual lives. One of those choices has depended on the courage to practice long-term thinking, and to make bold, courageous, anticipatory decisions at a time when problems have become perceptible but before they have reached crisis proportions. The other crucial choice illuminated by the past involves the courage to make painful decisions about values. (522-23).

My daughter will be my age in fifty years, in 2057. Will our society have made these bold, courageous decisions? How will our generation be remembered then?

Robert Miller, Professor of English, NHC

In upcoming issues we plan to address specific topics such as civil rights, employment and education.

Stay tuned. PG

In Memorium

Molly Ivins

INCOMPARABLE

1945—2007



Social Security Update

The following update was released by the union's state affiliate, the Texas Federation of Teachers, in its Legislative Hotline on February 1. It provides some news on the Social Security Fairness issue as well as background on exactly what the injustice is for employees unfamiliar with the current law. If the Social Security Fairness Act is to pass, one problem to solve is how to pay for fixing the inequity. The cost will be considerable, but the cost issue does not justify the current inequity in the system.

Social Security Fairness: The cause of Social Security fairness for Texas educators and other public servants got a boost this week from State Rep. Rick Noriega, Democrat of Houston, who filed a Texas House resolution in Austin urging Congress to pass the Social Security Fairness Act. Noriega's resolution, House Concurrent Resolution 51, makes a strong case for the repeal of two unfair federal offsets of Social Security benefits that hit Texas school employees especially hard.

Noriega's resolution notes that the Government Pension Offset effectively eliminates the Social Security benefit of retired spouses, widows, or widowers who also receive a public pension based on their own work for entities not covered by Social Security (such as the vast majority of Texas school districts). HCR 51 also points out that the so-called Windfall Elimination Provision deprives education employees and other public servants of Social Security retirement benefits they have duly earned on their own behalf from jobs covered by Social Security, just because they also earned a public pension from an entity not covered by Social Security. This offset typically takes away \$340 a month of the earned benefit of each of these retirees.

All in all, more than a million public servants are victimized by these two unfair offsets, and a great many of them are Texas educators. TFT applauds Rep. Noriega for introducing HCR 51 at the state capitol. [If you have an opinion to express to legislators on the Social Security Fairness Act, you can

get more information from the TFT website, www.tft.org. You can also contact them on TFT's toll-free line to the U.S. Capitol, 1-866-327-8670.]

Your efforts will be particularly timely as our allies in Congress plan to make a push next week for more cosponsors of the U.S. House and Senate versions of the Fairness Act, H.R. 82 and S. 26. In less than a month the House version has drawn 200 cosponsors and the Senate version thirteen. Last session's House bill attracted 328 cosponsors and the Senate version had 30. This time around we aim for more sponsors and for real action on this long-overdue measure. The two U.S. senators from Texas, Republicans Kay Bailey Hutchison and John Cornyn, have not signed up yet. Two Houston area House members who have not signed on in support are John Culberson, Republican of Houston and Kevin Brady, Republican of The Woodlands.

Staff

Board Policy

About eighteen months ago, newly hired Vice Chancellor/General Counsel Renee Byas met with faculty leaders to discuss a number of issues with which we are routinely engaged. That conversation included the revision of the District's current policy manual. We were told that the revision committees were completing their work and drafts would be forthcoming. Vice Chancellor Byas committed to providing the faculty leadership with copies of the drafts as they became available. We were heartened by her commitment because it would allow us time for thoughtful and careful analysis of the changes. The commitment meant that the District would avoid dumping the entire document in our laps all at once with a short timeline for review. Unfortunately, that commitment was never honored. The AFT's practice has always been to honor commitments, and we are disturbed that this one fell through the cracks.





As a matter of fact, the committees did finish their work not long after that meeting eighteen months ago, but the drafts were never sent to us. It was not until January 11, 2007 that all employees received an email from Dr. Pickelman releasing the entire draft of the revised policy. His comments noted that “Personnel changes, a new format, a seemingly forever review cycle...all contributed to the delay in releasing the document. I apologize to all of you that it has taken this long.” The union is grateful that Dr. Pickelman acknowledged and explained the delay, but we still wonder what happened to the original commitment from the vice chancellor.

The chancellor’s email sets a deadline of March 9, 2007 for employees to provide comments. The union’s concern here is that the policy manual is a long and complicated document. Eight weeks is a relative short window for review considering employees’ sometimes frantic schedules. The administration’s goal is for the Board of Trustees to have their first reading of the revised manual at their May meeting so that the new policy manual may take effect in Fall 2007.

So long as the revisions were in the hands of the administration, the revision process dragged on seemingly forever. Now that employees are asked to review the new document, there appears to be a quick rush to completion, regrettably sometimes a pattern from the administration.

The speed with which employees are to review the document is complicated by the fact that some serious concerns have been raised about the revisions, especially in the HR section. In particular, under Change in Contract Status (Section IV, HR, subsection 8, “Change in Status”) the proposed revision states that faculty on multi-year contracts may be returned to an annual contract: “Change in contract status is not a discharge for cause. It is a decision made within the terms of the contract in order to meet the best interests of the College and/or Dis-

trict.” Similar language exists in the current manual (Section D, Personnel, section DM, “Change in Status”). However, its presence surprised a number of faculty leaders. It is unclear to us exactly when this policy was slipped into the manual. Now is the perfect time to change this policy.

Current and proposed policy prevent faculty on multi-year contracts from being dismissed without cause. However, they do allow the administration to move a multi-year faculty member back to a one-year contract. Then the one-year contract can simply be non-renewed, and the faculty member is out.

Policy should require cause to move a multi-year contract faculty member to a single year contract, and that cause must be legitimate. Allowing a change in contract status based on administrative judgment of the “best interest of the College and/or District” provides far too much latitude to the administration. For instance, if a faculty member is vocal about needed change in the District, that behavior could be administratively deemed not in the “best interest of the college.” That latitude has the potential to chill open discussion and debate as well as academic freedom. Change in status for multi-year contracts should only be for legitimate cause as spelled out in the policy manual. In the interest of legal clarity the AFT has contacted our lawyer with the pertinent sections to investigate the legal ramifications.

The administration should consider delaying implementation to allow for a more thorough review of proposed policy. If the administration refuses a delay, the AFT urges all employees to pull together in a concerted effort to review the proposed policy manual as thoroughly as possible and offer appropriate responses.

Alan Hall



AFT - Sponsored Police Training Continues

On Friday, January 26, 2007, the union offered the second round of an excellent training program for NHMCCD campus police officers and other local law enforcement agencies. The program is conducted by the Counter Terrorism Intelligence Group, a FBI task force working with officers from local agencies including Houston Police Department, Sherriff's Department, Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, and Federal Air Marshals. The Houston taskforce received the FBI Director's Award in 2004, a most prestigious honor.

The AFT has been a strong supporter of training for the District's campus officers and sponsors this program out of a concern for the safety of our students and employees with particular concern for the safety of our officers charged with public safety on our campuses.



The training again proved to be a great success. Many of the officers attending made a point of stopping to thank the union for sponsoring such an outstanding program.

Campus officers interested in attending future sessions may contact Debra Pruitt, Program Manager, Law Enforcement Academy. External agencies should contact Officer Fred Kessler, HPD, JTTF, at 713-639-8515. The next training date will be August 17, 2007 at Tomball College.

Staff

Membership Eligibility

Membership in the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) is open to full and part-time faculty and staff up through the dean level. If you would like to join or find out more information about membership, please contact any of the officers listed on page 8 of this newsletter, or check out our online information and application at www.aft-nhmccd.org.

Monthly AFT Dues

Full-time Faculty	\$28.30
Full-time Professional Staff	\$24.50
Full-time Support Staff	\$20.90
Adjunct Faculty & Staff	\$10.00

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2/06

USE THIS AD IN FEBRUARY IF YOU HAVE POTENTIAL MEMBERS READING YOUR NEWSLETTER



Campus Updates

NORTH HARRIS COLLEGE

With the semester fully under way, things remain mercifully quiet here at the North Harris Campus. Dr. Sam has resigned as president, and, having served his final day in that capacity, he is off for the cooler climes of Chicago. A search for his successor has begun, and the AFT has several members on the search committee. We continue to follow up on a couple of personnel conflicts, both of which appear to have been remedied to the satisfaction of our members.

Bruce Machart, AFT Faculty VP

KINGWOOD COLLEGE

The start of a new semester is always hectic, but things seemed to go much better at Kingwood during this registration. The faculty presented several concerns to Dr. Stegall after last fall's registration, and I am happy to report that they were all addressed. Dr. Nadine Jenkins and her staff and Dr. Terry Sawma and his staff put together a plan for registration, and things went much smoother. There were fewer IT problems and student complaints. I would like to congratulate all of the administrators, faculty, and staff that actively participated in the spring registration on a job well done. The "ice storm" has everybody playing catch up, and with conference day coming up it will not get any easier. We are scrambling to keep up, but I know the outstanding faculty and staff at Kingwood will make it happen. Dr. Stegall was the guest of Faculty Senate, and it was a very informative meeting. Have a great spring!

Rich Almstedt, AFT Faculty VP

So far no one at Cy-Fair has mentioned any problematic issues. I guess this is good, but I know there must be some issues that just haven't been expressed to me.

Robert McGehee AFT Faculty VP

TOMBALL COLLEGE

Ahoy Maties!

Once again we set our sails on the TCS Tomball (The Chancellor's Ship) and head for the open seas of Spring Semester. Tis smooth sailing so far, and e'er there is ne'er a storm in sight, or all hands are so busy scrubbing decks and tying down sails that they have not paused to air their grievances. We did have a deck rope or two tangled at first sail (meaning there were a couple of issues concerning class assignments), but the Lieutenants (affected faculty) in charge of those ropes managed to get them cleared in time to toss them aboard before we sailed. So far, all is quiet on the Western waters, and 'tis hoped to stay that way til we tie up at Port Spring Break.

MONTGOMERY COLLEGE

The AFT membership at Montgomery College continues to grow! Welcome new members! We have been working on issues that are important to all members. We'll have more details in the next Advocate

Julie Alber, AFT Faculty VP

Cheri Riggs, AFT Staff VP



Faculty and Staff Excellence Winners



Faculty	Staff
James Good	Wilma Bloesch
Patsy Gray	Mary Anne Cardinal
Michael Harman	Carol Kramer
April Moore	Michelle Manuel
Tami Shafiee	Tammy Young



Faculty	Staff
Habib Far	Jackie Cooper
Craig Livingston	Jake Parks
Denise Lorenz	Christina Thibodeaux



Faculty	Staff
Mari Omari	Shelia Benard
Suzy Page	Betty Pinkney
David Putz	Shane Shoaf



Faculty	Staff
Patricia Falbo	Gilda Foster
Bo Rollins	Kitty Jay
Rachel Whitten	Melissa Pickering

Faculty	Staff
Paul Cooke	John Clark
Rob Coyle	Larry Conner
Idolina Hernandez	Rudy Jiminez
Carolyn Jo	



Congratulations to AFT Members

Raul Reyes

for receiving Kingwood College's PTK 2006 Faculty Scholar Award in appreciation for his commitment to scholarship;

Wei Li

for the NHMCCD Faculty International Exploration Grant which gave him funds to travel to the People's Republic of China to participate in the Conference.



Welcome

The AFT welcomes **Catherine Olson** to the Executive Committee. We know she will bring a powerful, unique perspective to the board.



Twelve Reasons (People Often Give) Not to Join a Teachers Union

1. "Unions can't accomplish anything here in Texas."

Reply: Oh, yes, they can! Although it's true that Texas is a right-to-work state, and our labor laws seem to be stuck in the Middle Ages, teachers can win important victories through unionization. A good example is what happened in Corpus Christi over two decades ago. The local chapter of the TFT won the right to represent all the teachers in the district in bargaining with the school board. And the local chapter of the TFT at North Harris Montgomery CC in Houston has gotten a number of employees reinstated when they were terminated because of things as minor as a personality clash with their supervisor.

2. "Teachers are professionals, not workers."

Reply: Well, wouldn't it be nice if we were paid like the professionals we are? But that's not really the main point. Today even physicians are organizing themselves into unions.

3. "Unions? Aren't they a bunch of guys (and sometimes gals) who carry baseball bats and walk picket lines?"

Reply: I've got news for you, friend! There has been far more violence directed *against* unions over the years than there has been violence *by* unions. But in any case, don't worry! Nobody is going to ask you to walk a picket line and take a poke at anyone who crosses it.

4. "Joining a union is expensive."

Reply: Everything worthwhile in life comes with a price tag. Raising kids or having a pet can be expensive. Making a pledge to a church, synagogue, or mosque can be expensive. However, union dues are probably one of the better bargains going. And besides, there is a sliding scale of dues reflecting the salary level of the employee.

5. "Why should I join a union when the vast majority of my colleagues don't? Why should I fight their battles?"

Reply: I can relate to this. In the 70's, when I taught English at the Defense Language Institute, Lackland Air Force Base, San Antonio, I was one of fewer than 5% of the teachers who joined our union (American Federation of Government Employees). Sure, it rankled me when I thought of how a tiny handful of us were the ones fighting for the raises and benefits which everyone enjoyed. But those of us in the union had the satisfaction of knowing that none of our colleagues who badmouthed the union turned down the raises which we won for them.



6. "Unions may have been necessary at the turn of the preceding century, but today? Come on!"

Reply: Have you ever wondered why we don't still have children working in coal mines or people working seven days per week with no benefits or job security? It's not because of the generosity of their employers but because unions have fought for their rights. It's true that we don't see today some of the worst excesses of the past. However, there are still injustices in the workplace and unions are in the forefront to remove them.

7. "Hey, joining a union could cost me my job! After all, Texas is a 'work at will' state."

Reply: Although it is true, as mentioned above, that Texas labor law seems to be mired in the Middle Ages, the expression "work at will" is a cliché which employers like to use to cow their employees into submission. The fact is that workers have numerous rights guaranteed under federal law. Nobody can be fired or denied a promotion for joining a union.

8. "I'm just an adjunct. The union is for the full-time teachers. What could it do for me?"

Reply: The union comprises full-time and adjunct faculty, and professional-technical, classified, and hourly employees, too. The vast majority of full-time faculty members recognize that adjuncts are exploited; many of them were once part-timers themselves. One of the most insidious techniques which college administrators use is "divide and conquer." They like to play the full-time and adjunct faculty off against each other. The union is the glue which will hold us together.

9. "I'm too busy to join a union."

Reply: OK, it's true that we all have different schedules, family responsibilities, etc. But whether you can volunteer lots of your time or none of your time, the union will welcome you as a member.

10. "My spouse is the primary breadwinner in the family. I look upon teaching as volunteer work. I don't feel exploited at all!"

Reply: Not all of your fellow faculty members are as fortunate as you; not all of us have spouses or partners with jobs which pay well and provide benefits for everyone in the family. However, no matter how much you may or may not need the income, teaching is a profession, not volunteer work, and should be rewarded as such.

11. "I wouldn't want my dues going to support political candidates whom I didn't like."

Reply: In Texas, dues money NEVER goes to support political candidates. In fact, that's illegal here! But that doesn't mean that we can't be political. We have a Committee on Political Education (COPE) fund, where voluntary (repeat: voluntary) contributions can be made for political activities. Donations to any candidates or campaigns are decided by the membership. Further, donations are based on issues, not party affiliation. For example, in the recent gubernatorial election, the TFT endorsed Carol Strayhorn, an independent, over Chris Bell, the Democratic candidate, because of her progressive stand on educational issues.

12. "We already have faculty organizations at the ACC. Isn't the ACC chapter of the TFT just duplicating their work?"

Reply: The TFT/ACC is in no way in competition with the regular ACC faculty and staff groups. TFT/ACC works to further the goals of the various employee organizations. All of us, whether full-time faculty, adjunct faculty, professional-technical, classified, or hourly, share a love of education in general and the ACC in particular. By joining hands with our brothers and sisters across all employee lines, and in organized labor as a whole, we can make progress.

Charles Wukasch has been an adjunct faculty member at the ACC for over two decades and is a long-time union member as well.



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CALL FOR ARTICLES

We invite all employees to send us their opinions, news, questions, and so forth. *The Advocate* is a forum for information and free interchange of ideas. Send your articles to **Pat Gray, Editor**, NHC, ext. 5545 or e-mail: patsy.gray@nhmccd.edu, or **Heather Mitchell, Assistant Editor**, CFC, ext. 3254, or e-mail: heather.mitchell@nhmccd.edu or submit to any of the other following officers:

Alan Hall, President	North Harris College	ACAD 217-G	ext.5544
Velma Trammell	North Harris College	DTEC 101	ext. 5612
Bruce Machart	North Harris College	ACAD 217-A	ext. 5542
Bob Locander	North Harris College	ACAD 270	ext. 5592
Allen Vogt	North Harris College	ACAD 264-C	ext. 5583
Vivian Brecher	North Harris College	LIBR 114	ext. 5403
Rich Almstedt	Kingwood College	FTC 100-G	ext. 1656
Laura Yates	Kingwood College	SFA 113-D	ext. 1414
Catherine Olson	Tomball College	S - 153 - H	ext. 3776
Richard Becker	Tomball College	E-271-D	ext. 1835
Julie Alber	Montgomery College	SSC 205-A	ext. 7241
Cheri Riggs	Montgomery College	C 100-C	ext. 7370
Robert McGehee	Cy-Fair College	ART 113-H	ext. 1217

Membership Has Its Benefits

The union encourages employees to join because they believe that college employees should have a voice in their professional lives. We don't encourage employees to join because they anticipate conflict or are already engaged in a conflict. In fact, if they are already embroiled in a situation, we are unable to help them. It is all too common for someone to approach the AFT and say something like, "I've been an employee for the district for several years, and I've just recognized the importance of joining." Typically, following that comment is, "I'm in trouble and need help." I finally lost track of how many times in the last year I've had to say, "I'm sorry, but member benefits don't cover anything that pre-dates membership." The individuals to whom I had to say that were invited to join and provided some advice on how to proceed with their

situation, but assistance ended there. Were they members, a host of benefits would have been available. The AFT provides its members with advice and guidance as well as representation in conflict resolution and grievances. We have our own local attorney and can seek legal advice and counsel for members. We maintain a local legal defense fund. In addition, membership dues include, at no extra charge, \$8 million in professional liability insurance for claims arising out of professional activities.

Most of our members don't join because they believe that they may need the AFT's help in a conflict. They join because they believe in the values of the AFT— that employees should be treated with dignity and respect, that employees should help each other, that employees should

have a voice in their professional lives, that employees deserve fair pay and good working conditions, and that the district needs a system providing checks and balances. They join because they want to support an organization that helps others in so many ways. A nice benefit is that, if they do need help, it's there for them.

If you believe in these values and are not a member, now is the perfect time to join. The AFT advocated effectively for the raise employees received this year. The annual membership dues are a small percentage of the raise. If you believe in our values, take action now and join the AFT.

Alan Hall