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UPM

United Professors of Marin

**American Federation of Teachers
Local 1610
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UPM
United Professors of Marin



HAVE
A
GREAT
SUMMER!



Ponderings of the President

By Ira Lansing

Warning: this column contains language that may be considered offensive by some. Stop reading if you are sensitive to the use of obscenities.

OF COURSE A LABEL LIKE THE ABOVE is more likely to be an invitation to most people to be sure to continue reading! Don't you open the e-mail whose subject says "Do Not Open!!"? Well, I don't, but so far this is a free country, so do as you please.

And of course, some people would add to the above warning that this column has repeatedly contained ideas that might be considered offensive by some. Well, consider the source, maintain a perspective and recognize that you are not being forced to read any of this publication.

After all of that, there is no smooth segue into the actual topic of my column, so let's just go do it.

The weather has finally dried out and it has begun to warm up. With some blue skies overhead, my thoughts turn to one of my favorite pastimes - baseball. I have always preferred this sport, both to watch and play, over most others. Despite the criticism that it is too slow, etc., I have found the pauses perfect for mulling over strategies, reviewing options and viewing the current situation. And because of its speed or lack thereof, it is also a perfect sport to listen to over the radio,

something I can remember doing as a kid, with the transistor radio under my pillow, listening to the muted voice of Vin Sculley.

As I grew older, playing baseball gained in attraction. I did well enough to hold my own at third base, with a fair share of hits to keep my own playing time at a minimal level of satisfaction. However, whether standing on the field or sitting on the bench, I began to come to some amazing realizations about baseball. It appeared to me to be one of the more egalitarian sports. If you ever took a physical education class at a public high school in the United States of America, you know that PE is the true melting pot of the school. Students you never saw anywhere else - for a myriad of reasons - showed up in your PE classes. Regardless of academic abilities, whether good or bad as athletes, baseball could accept them one and all. The sport is such that you could be on the playing field for an entire class period and never touch the ball, never have anything to do with the outcome of the game. Depending on how good or bad your teammates might be and how long a high school PE period was, a player might never get an at bat in a game. Your abilities, or lack of them, would not necessarily be known, yet you were part of the team. What camaraderie, what team work!

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The Editor of the *Press* invites members of the faculty to submit articles on topics of interest to union members, such as working conditions, safety, contract articles, and the like. Please submit articles to the Editor, *Union Press*, UPM. The UPM has a mailbox in the mailroom at the Kentfield Campus.

Letters to the Editor are encouraged. All letters should be signed and addressed to Editor, *Union Press*, UPM or emailed to comcarla@yahoo.com.

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To: Payroll, College of Marin

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I hereby authorize the Marin Community College to deduct from my earnings the sum of \$ _____ beginning in the month of _____, _____ (year), and each month thereafter, and to remit this sum to the United Professors of Marin PAC ID # 990958 until I revoke this authorization in writing.

Signature: _____ Address: _____

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More Ponderings

(Continued from Page 2)

It was not until I heard George Carlin that I completely realized how different baseball is from so many other sports. It has a sense of independence not found in other games. The entire playing field is not standard in size from location to location, the field itself has the elegant name of “diamond”, and as Carlin so aptly points out, the object of this game is to go home! What better objective could one ask for? He goes on to say that the sport also includes sacrificial behavior, and before each and every game someone reminds all present that this is indeed a game, not work and that this is fun time - “Play ball!” is the starting cry by the umpire, not “Work ball!”

As I moved on in life and assumed more responsibilities, I was still able to see and appreciate the value of baseball and the lessons it provides. Ignore the fact that it abounds in numerical data and I happen to teach mathematics and statistics. What other sport could tell you how often a particular player has hit a double with a runner on first and one out and a count of 2 balls and 2 strikes at night while his team was ahead by two or more runs? Oh, and you want to know if the pitcher was left-handed or right-handed as

well? Baseball is your game. Forget that relevancy to my teaching areas. Let’s focus more on the labor aspects of the game.

Baseball is the only sport where the management dresses like the players. Coaches and managers all wear the same uniform in baseball, not a coat and tie like basketball or football coaches, or even street clothes in contrast to a swim suit or gym clothes or jockey garb or..whatever. Truly egalitarian. Historical aside: the reason for this same dress code in baseball has to do with the ability to determine who was allowed on the playing field and who was not. In the early days of the game, when fans stood right up against the edge of the playing field, the umpire could tell who could be there by the presence of a uniform. No uniform, stand back. Baseball managers and coaches are allowed on the playing field, unlike most other sports where it could be a penalty for a manager to be on the field.

Today I cannot truly advocate for dressing one way or another in academia. It probably comes down to a matter of personal comfort, although I think many administrators and probably some faculty, feel an obligation to “dress for success and respect” and that entails certain accoutrements, like coats, ties, dresses and the like. I’m just glad that I can accomplish success and respect with a wardrobe filled with Levi 505s.

More Dots

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discuss the “C” word. A serious study of *communism* is diligently avoided by educators in our country, despite the fact that Karl Marx’s ideas have influenced every modern historical event and informed and inspired most social sciences and social justice movements throughout the world. The old tiger may be dead, but timid American academics are still afraid of his power.

Fortunately, not all people are so faint-hearted. Just this past May Day (as on every May 1st) tens of millions of people in scores of countries around the world; academics and scholars and students as well as average working people, were willing to stand up and utter the “C” word. They marched to honor their belief that the world could and should be organized in a more egalitarian way and that one need not be afraid to study and speak up for these noble ideals. Perhaps there will be a time when American academics too will have the courage to study and teach that the name Marx represents more than just a family of comedians.

A happy, (if belated) International Workers’ Day to all.

Connecting the Dots

News and Opinion by Arthur Lutz

“Big C”

There’s an old Chinese proverb, “*Even though the tiger is dead, people are afraid to approach the carcass.*”

The Chinese were not really talking about tigers or carcasses. They were speaking about words and ideas. The proverb means that there are certain words that are so threatening, so taboo, that people are afraid to utter them for fear that these words, like the dead tiger, might spring up and bite. Words may be “dead,” but people are often afraid to go near them.

Other cultures were also concerned about the power of words. The ancient Hebrews (and religious Jews today) used an abbreviation to avoid speaking or writing the name of God. They feared that if his name were vocalized, a punitive Jehovah might be awakened and spring down and bite. And there are cultures in which one never shares one’s own personal name with strangers. And nearly all of us avoid using the “N” word and the “F” word in most situations. The taboo against using certain words is strong and people can suffer serious consequences for

violation. Words may be “dead,” but as the Chinese proverb observes, their utterance still leaves people with fear and trembling.

Consider the “C” word. Many people use the less threatening expression “*Big C*” rather than say the actual word. They fear that if they speak this dreaded word, they might be stigmatized and rejected by neighbors and friends.

And their fears are not unfounded. Back in the 1950’s I knew people who were fired from their jobs because their bosses suspected they had the “*Big C*”. Neighbors avoided speaking to them because of their “*Big C*.” Even some of their best friends abandoned them rather than associate with someone who had the “*Big C*.” People were afraid that if they got too close, the tiger might bite and they also would suffer the consequences.

Perhaps you’re thinking that the “C” word I’m speaking about is *Cancer* and that those who were spurned, suffered from some sort of malignancy. But this is not the case. The “*Big C*” to which I’m referring is not *Cancer*. The “*Big C*” that so many people were afraid to talk about was... *COMMUNISM*.

The men and women who were subjected to this fear and loathing were communists. They were people who believed in a system of government where greed or an accident of birth didn’t determine a person’s destiny, and they tried to build a social order free from poverty and exploitation. They believed that people should contribute to society according to their abilities and receive from society according to their needs. They fought for civil rights and women’s rights and labor rights. And because they believed and spoke out about this they were branded with the “*Big C*” label and, like lepers, they were feared and ostracized. And some were blacklisted and some imprisoned and their families were treated with scorn and distrust.

Much of this happened many years ago, and we are assured that things are different now. Yet even though many of the ideas that these people espoused are now “dead,” some people are still afraid to approach the “*Big C*” carcass. In America, political scientists and economists and historians and philosophers rarely study or

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News From Beyond Marin

(The following articles were taken from AFT Online, the American Federation of Teacher's On-line Newsletter).

AFT Activism Helps Foil Deeper Budget Cuts

AFTER WEEKS OF DELAY, THE House of Representatives narrowly passed a budget resolution in the early hours of May 18. The final vote was 218-210, with 12 Republicans joining all Democrats to vote against it. The final product is marginally better than President Bush's original budget proposal, which served as the template for the budget the GOP leadership tried to force on the House earlier this year. The Bush budget cuts to Department of Education programs were the deepest in the department's 26-year history, involving 42 programs equaling about \$3.5 billion. Should the president's budget be approved, Pell Grants would get no additional money, Title I grants would be frozen, most education programs would be cut or frozen, and several college prep programs would be scrapped for a new reform program. The Bush budget also proposed cuts in

priority healthcare and job training programs beneficial to working families. Earlier this year, moderate Republicans in the House blocked the bill in their chamber, due to concerns over dramatic cuts in many critical education, health and other programs originally proposed by their leadership. This impasse forced the House leadership to negotiate with Republican moderates to accommodate their demands. Although the moderates were only able to secure \$4 billion of the \$7.2 billion they were seeking, obtaining even this much was a major concession in an increasingly conservative House, says Jennifer Luciano, AFT appropriations lobbyist. She cited the activism of thousands of AFT members who sent letters to key GOP targets together with other concerned advocacy groups, which prevented the GOP leadership from securing the votes needed to rubber-stamp the budget earlier this year.

Debunking Myths About Teacher Seniority

AFT RESEARCHER HOWARD Nelson will square off with Michelle Ree of the New Teacher Project at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., on May 25, to debunk the myth that seniority rights prevent high-poverty schools from getting and keeping qualified teachers. As Nelson says in the May/June *American Teacher*, "This assumption is, literally, an urban legend." Nelson notes that new teachers are evenly distributed between low-poverty schools (6.1 percent) and high-poverty schools (5.7 percent) in urban districts with collective bargaining. Further, in states without collective bargaining, new teachers are placed in high-poverty schools at three times the rate of low-poverty schools. Stay tuned for Nelson's upcoming report on the issue, "The Impact of Collective Bargaining on Teacher Mobility."

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More News From Beyond Marin

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Free Speech Coalition Rebuts Horowitz Book

A COALITION OF STUDENT, FACULTY and civil liberties groups has released a report that documents the numerous errors and misrepresentations in David Horowitz's *The Professors: The 101 Most Dangerous Academics in America*. The report, called "Facts Count" is from Free Exchange on Campus, a coalition co-founded by the AFT. It provides a critical analysis and fact-check of the Horowitz book and concludes that the actions for which Horowitz's book condemns professors are entirely appropriate and within faculty rights in an atmosphere that supports free inquiry. "Facts Count" documents inaccuracies, distortions and manipulations of fact in Horowitz's research. It also faults the premise behind *The Professors*— that college students lack the critical thinking skills they need to engage with controversial ideas.

Download a copy of "Facts Count" at freeexchangeoncampus.org.

AFT Members Join Rally to Save Darfur

A LARGE CONTINGENT OF AFT members and staff were among the tens of thousands of people who gathered on the national Mall in Washington, D.C., on April 30 to call on the Bush administration to step up its efforts to end the genocidal violence in Darfur. More than 400,000 people have been killed and several million have been driven from their homes since 2003. AFT vice presidents Ruby Newbold and Laura Rico and participants in the AFT PSRP conference that took place in Washington, D.C., over the weekend were among those who joined the demonstration. "We are here to stand in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Darfur," Rico said in an interview. The AFT was among the sponsors of the rally as part of the Save Darfur Coalition. Among the speakers to address the crowd were Nobel Peace Prize winner Elie Wiesel, U.S. Rep. Donald Payne (D-N.J.), Sen. Barack Obama (D-Ill.) and actor George Clooney.

A Message to Our Members

YOU HAVE NO DOUBT NOTICED THAT you received yet more money this April in addition to your regular salary. Although this extra windfall was likely welcomed by all of our members, the actual amount of the raise (1.7%) is insufficient according to UPM calculations of retiree savings.

UPM will be entering into arbitration to correct this shortage and will keep you posted on the outcome. In the meantime, if you would like to donate your retro check to UPM to cover arbitration fees, your generosity will be greatly appreciated.

Have a wonderful summer, but please stay posted through this newsletter and other faculty communication sources for important updates, on this and other issues, just in case management decides to make important decisions during your absence.