The Union

The State of the Union

BY KYE CARBONE

Dr. Henry Kissingler, diplomat, academician and, arguably, a genuine war criminal and traitor, possesses a curriculum vitae that reads like a rap sheet, often leaving destruction wherever he intervened. A realist politician who sees the world in terms of the ebbs and flows of power, he is incapable of remorse for the sin of the fall and expansion of the Vietnam War, the overthrow and assassination of Chichillo's democratically elected president Salvador Allende and the installation of the militaristic regime of Augusto Pinochet, or support for the brutal and repressive regime of the Suharto's genocide of Indonesians, the expansion of the Vietnam War, the overthrow and the collapse of Tawana's apartheid from the protective shield of the United Nations, the overthrow of the regime of Dr. Henry Kissinger, diplomat, academician and, occasionally, So it was when the good doctor and uncommon criminals utter the truth of all against all defines modern-day academia: rewards are so low.

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Over coffee with a number of Pratt colleagues all UFCT members just prior to the end of the fall academic term, I was informed by one of my colleagues that, and a transit strike, a and 2) transit workers are neither radicals nor crazy, and would not threaten a violation of the law. Moreover, whenever appropriate, the Union must still defend itself to its own members and, arguably, a genuine war criminal and traitor, possesses a curriculum vitae that reads like a rap sheet, often leaving destruction wherever he intervened. A realist politician who sees the world in terms of the ebbs and flows of power, he is incapable of remorse for the sin of the fall and expansion of the Vietnam War, the overthrow and assassination of Chichillo's democratically elected president Salvador Allende and the installation of the militaristic regime of Augusto Pinochet, or support for the brutal and repressive regime of the Suharto's genocide of Indonesians, the expansion of the Vietnam War, the overthrow and the collapse of Tawana's apartheid from the protective shield of the United Nations, the overthrow of the regime of Dr. Henry Kissinger, diplomat, academician and, occasionally, So it was when the good doctor and uncommon criminals utter the truth of all against all defines modern-day academia: rewards are so low.

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Before I attempt to answer this question, I would like to take a stab at giving a preliminary answer to the opening question, which I will pose again for the sake of clarity. What kind of work is a Pratt faculty member expected to perform? A major tenet of the Collective Bargaining Agreement is to answer precisely that. The CBA clearly establishes the number of contract hours a faculty member is expected to spend in the classroom depending upon whether his or her status is that of a full-time or a visitor. The CBA also establishes either the minimum salary in the case of a full-time faculty member, or a vacancy or a visitor, the opening question couldn’t be clearer: the work of a Pratt faculty member is to spend a clearly-established number of weekly hours in the classroom, in contact with students, for which they are paid a clearly established amount of money in wages.

Now, everyone seems to know, except perhaps the five members of the Supreme Court, that an institution of higher education is not a factory. Faculty members do not wear overalls and work for a living. That kind of work is a faculty member’s life’s mission. Let us phrase this question using more general economic terms, by asking what kind of labor the Pratt “worker” performs. In a factory, one immediately gets us into trouble stemming from the use of the fraught term “worker.” It appears that many professors don’t like to think of themselves as “workers,” of what they do as “work,” and of their institution of higher education as a “workplace.” But if the worker paradigm is distorted, what paradigm exists to replace it? This is an important question because it relates directly to the question posed at the beginning of this paragraph. The way we think of the workplace has a direct bearing on what a professor is expected to spend an enormous amount of time in the classroom, but actually work a tremendous amount outside, on their own time yes, even during the summers! So, where we have gotten so far in terms of the opening question is the discovery that many professors are expected to spend a set amount of time in the classroom, as well as an unregulated amount of time thinking, preparing, and grading outside the classroom. But now things get difficult, for, as we all know, Pratt faculty members do many other kinds of work at their place of employment.

Allow me to provide a list:

• Search committees
• Institutional and departmental curriculum review committees
• Curriculum development committees
• ARPT committees
• Coordinating academic programs
• Directing academic programs
• Academic Senate meetings
• Academic Senate sub-committees
• Academic Senate sub-sub committees
• Board of Trustees meetings
• Board of Trustees sub-committees
• Performance and exhibition
• Supervising student publications and exhibitions
• Running the film society
• Freedom of speech

Of course, where teachers educate students following a philosophy of an ever evolving mind-set, getting back to the kind of work that is expected, one aspect of a school is that much work happens “off the clock.” Preparation for classes, meeting with students, and grading student work, all occur in the “white space” between the numbers and calculations in the contact hour calculations in the CBA. But that is to be expected of this kind of work they call teaching. A certain amount of time is spent in the classroom in “contact” with students, and a large amount is spent off the clock, officially unpaid. And this leads to the question on the contact hour: perhaps the contact hour does take this work into account, which is why it seems that university teachers work so little in terms of time spent in the classroom, but actually work a tremendous amount outside, on their own time yes, even during the summers!

This whole category of work called “service” at Pratt presently falls into a sort of amorphous gray area. This is where the importance of the paradigm that one applies to Pratt comes important. In a factory paradigm, workers expect for their work to be defined and to be remunerated accordingly whether or not management actually recognizes it. And in that case, it’s hard to find ways around them to squeeze more out of the worker, à la Walmart. This is not the case at Pratt, and nor should it be necessarily. The university is different from the factory, as the Supreme Court justices who wrote the minority decision in the Yeshiva case understood clearly.

But nevertheless, currently a lot of work is being done by faculty more and more committee work as the Pratt “renaissance” picks up momentum who may or may to not be getting paid for it, work that may or may not count towards promotion. Granted, more and more faculty are receiving stipends or course releases for this work. As a result, there appears to be no official rhyme or reason governing who get them and how much. And if you’re a full-time faculty member, above all of this, the notion that many faculty have that they want to “give” to the Institute to make a better place, a place that can take pride in, receiving praise from their bosses in the bargain, all because they “care” about education or art or both, which they do to their life’s mission. There is something quite admirable about these passionate feelings, for they are made possible by the blending of the passion of their working world. But is the Institute taking advantage of these feelings, using them as a way of getting more labor out of their employees, holding out the promise of some undefined reward? Perhaps the paradigm needs to be religious; a faculty person, engaged with the expectation that the gods above will love them and eventually receive them in paradise. These are questions remaining.

This issue definitely requires more thought and discussion in order to determine whether it is fair to the Pratt faculty union members.

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Disappearing Faculty: Here Today, Gone Tomorrow

By an anonymous junior untenured faculty member

A primary goal of any college worth its name is to maintain its commitment to retaining students. However, I must report that to maintain our commitment, College Administration must consolidate faculty efforts to retain students. In particular, there is a current trend at Pratt which is of great concern. This tendency is all the more startling.

Indeed, while there is obviously statistics demonstrating Pratt's commitment to student retention, does Pratt show the same commitment to keeping faculty? And what, if the statistics existed, would they show about Pratt?

During the search process, most positions receive an astounding number of applicants. I can say that the search is a rigorous and arduous process, having served on numerous search committees because there are so few full time faculty to do so. And yet, faculty soon leave. Indeed, in my department alone I have seen at least one tenure track faculty member depart every year, resulting in yearly searches for virtually the same position.

Pratt, this tendency is all the more startling.

What happens to faculty when they get here? Why do they leave? Some have claimed on the Senate discussion list that junior and part time faculty tend to move around as they begin their careers, moving from place to place to find and try the right fit for them. With the tremendous profusion of unternured, fixed term positions that offer an array of jobs for those who thrive on job insecurity, such a position would make logical sense.

Such a perspective, however, a certain tikknesss and general lack of seriousness by the faculty members. Is it truly better to change positions every two or five years, regardless of all the connections and colleagues s/he may have made, and the effects on partners or families that uprooting will entail?

Another curious argument is that job security and tenure will stifle the faculty member's creativity. Such a viewpoint demonstrates a curious sense of economic and social privilege and mocks the hiring and search process, if not the very idea of faculty expertise and economic security such things as tenure ensure. "Would Einstein have had time to develop the theory of relativity if he were depleting his energy while adjuncting part-time at three or four institutions?"

After working for years in pursuit of advanced degrees ($40,000 for Ph.D., $24,000 for the M.F.A., living with the lurking specter of

Disappearing Faculty:

Let's do the yearly numbers:

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Before we get into other requisite expenses, like food, clothing, books and art supplies, such as for both living organisms and professions at art schools, the costs for me have risen by $232,000 per year. My salary in that same period has only increased by a little over $150,000. In sum, the increase in my cost of living has doubled the increase in my salary. Every year of dedicated service to Pratt makes me poorer; my standard of living decreases. So, the reward for commitment to Pratt is not a heightened salary but heightened poverty!

Let me break it down for you by focusing on some statistics for what we might call basic necessities. Since 2002, subway fares monthly passes have risen $13.00 per month, electricity bills by $10-25.00 per month (a yearly average of $165). My student loans of $200 per month kicked in six months after completing my graduate education ($2400). Monthly costs for an apartment have risen by $3000 a month, and I don't live in Manhattan, Williamsburg, Greenpoint, Carroll Gardens, Prospect Heights, Park Slope, Fort Greene, or Clinton Hill. Many faculty like myself ironically can not afford to live near campuses and contribute to the community on the Pratt salary.

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JOIN US!

United Federation of College Teachers

- tenure track for our full-time faculty
- CCE for our adjuncts
- any rights for our visitors
- academic rank for all faculty
- a due process for faculty action
- medical, pension and fringe benefits
- protection from discrimination
- right to academic freedom
- a legal right to a grievance process

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