

## Report on State of Local 1650

February 24, 1986

The report on the state of the Union, required by the Local's constitution, affords the membership an annual opportunity to review the accomplishments of the recent past and assess the challenges of the near future. This year, however, calls for a more extensive review of the Local's past since 1966 marks the twentieth anniversary of Local 1650's charter, and given the number of teachers recently hired at the College, it is even more important that the membership reflect upon the Federation's history.

Though Local 1650 marks its twentieth year, teacher unionism at HFCC predates 1966. Prior to 1966, College teachers were represented by the Dearborn Federation of Teachers which recently celebrated its fortieth anniversary. With the passage of Michigan' Public Employee Relations Act (PERA) in 1966, HFCC teachers had the opportunity to form a separate local affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers. HFCC teachers saw a need for a local that focused more exclusively and responsively upon professional and economic concerns at the College level. Under the leadership of Harry Welsh, Don Calkins, Hal Stokes, Archie Allen, John Dunn, Bill Hackett, Hank Navarro, and others, Local 1650 came into existence February 21, 1966. As a result of very difficult negotiations and strikes in 1966 and 1967, that of 1966 being the first in higher education in the nation's history, Local 1650 forged a model union contract and a model College Constitution.

In the twenty years thereafter, the College Federation has faced many difficulties in maintaining and improving the professional and economic lives of HFCC teachers. We have faced Board assaults upon work load, class size, extra-contractual compensation, tenure,

seniority, medical insurance coverage, and the College Constitution, virtually every provision of the contract. We have struggled to improve salary, endured wage freezes on occasion, and fought them off on other occasions. Unfortunately, there is a tendency to take for granted what we now enjoy, a tendency to underestimate the risks and sacrifices which produced our contractual rights and benefits, and a tendency to assume that these rights and benefits will always be there simply because "professionals" deserve such or a tendency to believe that others, a negotiating team perhaps, can in and of themselves protect and maintain rights and benefits. The twenty years of this Local's history and the forty years of the DFT's history reveal that every substantive right and benefit teachers possess was extracted with great difficulty from a begrudging if not hostile Board; those histories also reveal that only constant vigilance and resolve have preserved our rights and benefits from repeated Board assault.

If there are any lessons from the past twenty years, they are these. First, in the matters of wages, hours, and conditions of employment, teachers are workers, administration is management, and Trustees are bosses. While such uncompromising trade union terminology may offend certain professional sensitivities, such are the facts faced by HFCC teachers in every round of negotiations, every grievance hearing, every representation hearing, and every millage campaign.

Secondly, the Board has never "given" teachers anything in contract negotiations. Every provision of our contract has been the result of prolonged, arduous, often bitter negotiation or strike. This Local goes to the negotiating table prepared with exhaustive data and thorough argumentation, but information and logic seldom produce substantive change. Power does. The professional and economic status we enjoy are the result of the collective resolve of the Local 1650 membership and the power such resolve permits its negotiators to exert.

Third, the strength of this College is the quality of its teaching staff, not its administration and not its Board. This College attracts students because it has attracted an excellent teaching staff. In teaching as in other fields, talent follows money.

Outstanding teachers have come to HFCC and built its reputation because historically employment at HFCC has been economically attractive. The challenge now before College teachers and this Union is to compel the Board to provide the economic support necessary to keep this College an attractive place of employment. No Board has ever done so willingly.

Fourth, HFCC and teachers do not live in a political vacuum, as appealing as such a state might be. The quality of the College and its teachers' livelihoods is directly dependent upon political decisions at the local, state, and national levels of government. This Local has built a strong tradition of political involvement on the local and state levels. Some 85% of HFCC teachers contribute yearly to the Local's Political Action Fund. Nearly 60% have participated in recent millage campaigns, and over 15% in the last gubernatorial campaign. Local millage provides 15% of College revenue; state support accounts for 45% of College revenue. This College and this Local must maintain a presence in the eyes of elected officials whose decisions determine the extent of College revenue, the viability of College programs and departments, and 60% of teacher wages. Political reality dictates that all HFCC teachers must work on millage and Trustee campaigns, on phone surveys, poll distributions, and campaign mailings. Political reality dictates that College teachers must assist in the campaigns of candidates for public office who are supportive of education in general and HFCC in particular. To a significant extent HFCC teachers have done so, and the College has benefitted. There are those, though, who have not supported the political efforts of the Local, yet they reap the benefits of those efforts, and, quite frankly, they are riding the backs of their politically active colleagues.

Such are the lessons of 1650's twenty years. Such lessons have been hard lessons, and perhaps my tone reflects such. A great many HFCC teachers, active and retired, bequeath those lessons to us along with the fruits of those lessons - namely the professional and economic status which we enjoy at HFCC. Those teachers understood collective power; they formalized it in this Local's charter, in its contract, and in the College Constitution; they exercised it to give meaning to the phrase teaching profession. HFCC teachers exercise a significant role in institutional governance and the formulation of institutional polity.

We have the economic security to devote ourselves to teaching and research because of teacher unionism and because of our retirees and colleagues, who chartered, built, and preserved this Union.

Regarding the Union's nineteenth and twentieth years, 1985 and 1986, Local 1650 can claim several achievements and should prepare for at least two major challenges. 1985 witnessed the renewal of the District's entire operating millage and approval of the Ford Motor bond issue. At stake in the millage election was 15% of College operating revenues and some 90% of the P-12's. Also at issue was the District's \$17 million liability to Ford Motor. Failure of the bond issue would have devastated the P-12 and severely crippled the College. In the 1985 millage and bond effort, as in others, College teachers played the major role, in preparing mailings, conducting phone surveys, and monitoring the polls.

Local 1650 members were also instrumental in the recent election of Trustees Agnes Dobronski and Sharon Dulmage. This Local, with some 200 members, turned out, once again, more volunteers than District unions four times its size. The efforts of College teachers and other District employees and the impressive margins produced by those efforts should demonstrate to skeptical District employees that political activism is not only vital to the District's teachers but to aspiring candidates as well.

Also on the political scene, this local, through its MFT and AFL-CIO affiliation, participated in the effort to pass Public Act 91. This act represents the first major improvement of teachers' retirement benefits in over nine years. This legislation, with its improved medical coverage for retirees and its early retirement incentives, is but one illustration of the benefits derived from affiliation with organized labor.

1985 also brought a North Central Accreditation Report and the challenge of responding to the assaults upon the College teaching staff contained therein. While the North Central Team praised the professionalism and dedication of HFCC teachers, the team proceeded to attack the very features of this College which most contribute to professionalism and dedication. The North Central Team, comprised exclusively of administrators from mostly obscure institutions located in the South and West, criticized the degree to which HFCC

teachers participate in institutional governance, the percentage of budget devoted to teacher salaries, and the very number of full-time teachers employed at the College. Given the composition of team, perhaps such was to be expected.

Through the efforts and pressure of Local 1650 and the College Senate, the College has officially responded to the reactionary provisions of the report. Dr. Bundy's concurrence with the "spirit" of the Senate's response to North Central relative to faculty governance is praiseworthy. His observations relative to teacher salaries and full-time staffing could have been more forthcoming. The Local 1650 membership is indebted to Ed Chielens, Steve Brandt, and the Senate for their efforts in drafting the Senate's response to North Central and in "eliciting" Dr. Bundy's concurrence. The Union continues to ponder, though, the role certain administrators may have played in directing the attention of the North Central Team to these issues.

Of the challenges which face this Local in 1986, three are most noteworthy. The first is, once again, the question of political involvement. This College has benefitted directly and significantly from the passage of the temporary State income tax increase in 1982. Prior to the passage of that tax measure, the State had run up a \$1.7 billion debt under the Milliken administration, and HFCC saw serious declines in State revenues. Had Governor Blanchard and State legislators, such as Senator McCollough and Representative Young, not exercised political courage and fiscal responsibility, public education in general and HFCC in particular would be much diminished today. Given the fact that most responsible politicians of both political parties recognized the need for a tax increase, it is regrettable that the temporary tax increase has become a political football for political opportunists. Since Governor Blanchard took office, this College has seen a 31% increase in State revenues. We have seen State revenue increase from \$9,250,000 in 1982-83 to a current figure of \$12,073,000. An increase of \$640,000 is recommended for next year. HFCC teachers have assisted Governor Blanchard, Senator McCollough, and Representative Young in the past. We have even greater reason to do so this year.

1986 also marks the midway point of the Local's current three year contract with the Board of Trustees. The Federation is in the midst of a relatively quiet period of labor relations vis-a-vis the Board, but the perceptive and experienced recognize the lull which precedes the storm. Within six months, this Union will begin preparations for contract negotiations. Within a year, the Federation's team will be at the table. This Local and its membership must prepare for a very difficult round of negotiations. Historically, our Master's maximum salary has ranked among the top five salaries of tri-county districts. We are now 30th and falling. This issue must be addressed in the next negotiations, and addressing it will cost far more than the Trustees will want to spend for the work we perform.

Lastly, the College and the Local will experience further retirements in 1986. In a period of four years, this Union will have witnessed the retirement of fully one-fourth of its membership. These retirees are the teachers who saw the need for this Union and built it, who understand from firsthand experience how far the Union has advanced the economic and professional lives of HFCC faculty. For those reasons and others, the Local is actively engaged in the establishment of a retirees' chapter. The continued presence of 1650 retirees on campus and in the Union will help us all to understand, preserve, and transmit the history and meaning of teacher unionism.

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President