

The Graduate Student Advocate

City University of New York

October 1990

Volume II
 Number 2

slanderous inferences

Environmental Psychology Faculty Defends Decision To Terminate Student

September 18, 1990
 To the Editor:

The faculty of the Environmental Psychology sub program is acutely aware of the unique difficulties facing international students who come to study at the Graduate School. While we make no claims to having found solutions to these difficulties, we can honestly say that for many years we have worked to develop, within our sub program and with the administration of the Graduate School, options and procedures which could begin to address issues of concern to international students.

We therefore were both shocked and dismayed upon

reading the statements and accusations contained in the September, 1990 editorial regarding one of our international students, Endah Soebroto and the Environmental Psychology sub program ("From En-Route to Terminal"). Some of the statements made in that editorial present a distorted view of the policies of the Environmental Psychology sub program. Others can be characterized only as totally incorrect. While we doubt that the material contained in this reply to your editorial can undo the harm that you have inflicted on the faculty and students of the Environmental Psychology sub program we feel compelled to reply to your characterization of our faculty as having "...disgraced their discipline and the Graduate School."

Both the editorial and Ms. Mehta's article regarding Endah Soebroto ("International Student Struggles With Cancer — Terminated by the Environmental Psychology sub program") concern a student in our sub program. Because we are bound to confidentiality in discussions of any student, our comments regarding Ms. Soebroto must be confined to those aspects of this unfortunate episode which have appeared in print and have thus become part of the public domain.

In her article, Ms. Mehta asks, among other things, whether Endah Soebroto was terminated from our sub program at the Master's degree level because she had cancer. Midway through the anonymous editorial, the same question is posed. By the end of

the editorial, however, the anonymous editorial writer obviously concludes that this was the case since he or she then condemns the faculty for being a "disgrace."

Rather than making such slanderous inferences (based on a lack of information), Ms. Mehta or the editorial writer could have discussed this issue with the sub program chairs, Professors Chapin and Saegert. Had they done so, they would have learned that Ms. Soebroto was accepted into the program *only as a Master's level student* in 1984. The Fulbright scholarship men-

tioned in the paper was given to Ms. Soebroto on condition that she *only pursue a Master's degree*. Ms. Soebroto knew this to be the condition when she came here. We had to guarantee this to the Fulbright group and did so. And, because there is no terminal MA degree in our sub program, we arranged for Ms. Soebroto to complete an en-route Master's degree instead.

Ms. Soebroto was admitted to the sub program in 1984. She continued to matriculate in the sub program for *four years prior to her diagnosis of cancer in 1988* to complete what should have been a *two year* course of study for the Master's degree. If, as implied in both the editorial and Ms. Mehta's article, the "disgraceful" faculty wished to terminate Ms. Soebroto because of her cancer, then they might have asked why we did not do so *two years ago*? After all, Ms. Soebroto had, by that time, already spent four years in the sub program and still had not completed her Master's degree.

It is also implied that Ms. Soebroto was terminated because the faculty wished to deny Ms. Soebroto medical benefits associated with her employment at the Hunter College Library. Ms. Mehta quotes Ms. Soebroto as claiming that "They (referring to the sub program faculty) thought that I was using the sub program to get the insurance." We cannot vouch for the accuracy of the alleged quote by Ms. Soebroto. Assuming it is correct, however, and assuming that we wished to deny Ms. Soebroto treatment for her cancer because of our concern

Continued on page 4.

Rallying Against U.S. Aggression In the Middle East

By Mohamed Aly and Kim Ives

Although the U.S. media has done its utmost to whip up passions and xenophobia in the American public to support the Bush administration's massive troop deployment in the Middle East, there is a vast and growing reservoir of opposition to the U.S. government's war moves among the American people. On September 13th at Cooper Square, more than 2,500 people testified to this fact by rallying around calls for "no Vietnam war in the Middle East!" and "Bring the troops home now!"

This was the first major U.S. protest rally to take place since the Mideast crisis erupted on Aug. 2nd, though smaller demonstrations and meetings have taken place in many cities. The Coalition to Stop US Intervention in the Middle East, a broad grouping

of over 75 organizations and individuals, sponsored the event at Cooper Square. The Cooper Union Great Hall was filled to capacity by 1,000 people, while more than 1,500 protesters listened to the proceedings broadcast by loudspeakers installed outside the building. The evening featured 17 speakers representing a broad array of organizations and nationalities.

Despite the large turn-out, the event was boycotted by the major networks and the bulk of the U.S. press. Although *Newsday*, the *Times*, the *Daily News* and CNN provided brief mention of the event, the importance, vehemence and size of the protest was downplayed. Local TV and radio stations refused to attend even though they were apprised of the size of the overflow crowd. "The media is trying to convince us that

everyone is excited about this war, everyone thinks it's a just cause, everyone is excited about sending their son off to die," explained David Cline of the group Vietnam Veterans Against the War. "But I'm not so sad about the media not being here, because I stopped watching them on Aug. 2, when they started putting out all the lies, and I became so disgusted. We have freedom of the press, but no free press," Mr. Cline added.

Co-chaired by Gavrielle Gemma, a leading member of the Coalition, and Deborah Jackson, a representative from the National Conference of Black Lawyers, the event began with the reading of a letter from Ron Kovic, a highly decorated, disabled Vietnam veteran and author of *Born on the 4th of July*, a book about his war

Continued on page 3

Where Have All The Books Gone? Faculty Abuse of Library Borrowing Privileges

By Andrew Long

"Borrowing of material is limited to the doctoral faculty, to students registered at the Graduate School, to members of the Office of Research and University Programs, to those affiliated with Graduate School and University Center research centers, institutes, and groups, to officers of the University, to master's degree alumni of the Graduate School, and to Ph.D alumni of the City University of New York."

These are the borrowing privileges as stipulated in the 1990-1991 Mina Rees Library Handbook. Library staff report, however, that some faculty members do not return books which are overdue or needed for the "reserve" stacks, despite both formal and informal notification.

The handbook explains that

all borrowers may check out circulating books for eight weeks and renew them for an additional four weeks, "unless another request for the book has been received. If a book is overdue, it may not be renewed until the fine is paid. Students owing the library any fines or overdue books may neither renew nor borrow any other books." The fine for overdue books is 10 cents "for each day that the library is open," with a \$20.00 maximum charge for each item per annum.

The faculty is not required to pay library fines, and there is no formal punitive process for retrieving material from faculty even when this material is requested by another library user or is needed for reserve reading lists. One library staff member noted that although in 1974 the Graduate Council authorized the library to suspend borrowing privileges for faculty members with long overdue books, the library has yet to take this action. This failure to retrieve overdue books may be due to the library's slow record-keeping system, as well as to a desire on the part of the librarians not to "ruffle faculty feathers."

Associate Provost Geoffrey Marshall recently described the

Continued on page 2.

Inside

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Lakshmi Bandlamudi: Primal Constructions..... | 13 |
| John Condon: Gangsters..... | 15 |
| Gary Paul Gilbert: Writing Moscow..... | 11 |
| Michael Glassman: DSC Report..... | 2 |
| Elliot Jünger: Europe Without Borders..... | 7 |
| Muhammad Muhaisen: Reflections on the Middle East..... | 7 |
| Jenn Parker: Domsey Strike..... | 8 |
| Julia Scalione: Save The Homeland Forests..... | 2 |
| Thomas Smith: Part-Timers United..... | 3 |
| Ms. Update..... | 3 |
| Adam Vinueza: The Reproduction of Michael Levin..... | 5 |
| Around & About The Center..... | 2 |
| Editorials & Letters..... | 4 |
| Reflections & Commentary..... | 5 |
| World..... | 7 |
| Arts & Events..... | 11 |
| Announcements..... | 16 |

Around & About The Center

Where Have All The Books Gone?

Continued from page 1.

three steps taken by the library to retrieve overdue material from faculty members: a letter of notification, a telephone call, and then a letter from the Office of the Associate Provost. Provost Marshall stated that these measures have been effective, except in a few cases, when it was necessary for the Executive Officer of the recalcitrant faculty member's department to intervene. "We are dealing with fewer than six people," Provost Marshall said, "and further restrictions seem unnecessary."

Nonetheless, library records show that seventy-eight books have been charged out to twenty-two faculty members from 1981 to 1989. Although these professors have received at least two letters and a bill from the library, they have not yet responded. In the past, individual faculty members who have retired or moved to another university have kept as many as twenty-five books, and have not paid fines totalling as much as \$300. Some of these books are single volumes of a multiple volume series and can-

not be purchased separately; the library is unable to replace the whole series due to reductions in the book acquisition budget. The Library Committee, a sub-committee of the Graduate Council, has previously considered the problem of faculty abuse of borrowing privileges but has not yet taken formal steps to amend the situation.

The Graduate School library's borrowing policies do not conform with the policies of other City University libraries. At the John Jay College and Hunter College libraries, for example, faculty members are fined when they neglect to return overdue books. When the Mina Rees Library is fully automated (possibly as early as next Spring), faculty members who have not returned overdue material to one CUNY library will be refused borrowing privileges at the other CUNY libraries. Although the Graduate School faculty will not be required to pay library fines, the revocation of their borrowing privileges will be a matter of the automated procedure. ☐

Proposed Destruction of Cree and Inuit Homelands

By Julia Scalcione

Sept. 30, 1990 — Representatives from the Cree and Inuit tribes spoke about their struggle with Hydro Quebec to continue their traditional modes of subsistence. This benefit took place at Wetlands, an ecologically-minded club below Canal Street.

Last summer, representatives of the Cree Indians and Inuit Eskimos journeyed by canoe from Northern Quebec to New York City to dramatize their call for local attention and help in their plight to save their homelands, the northern forest and tundra. The James Bay region is home not only to large and extensive populations of wildfowl, polar bears, seals and caribou, but is also the home of the Inuit and 10,000 Cree. A proposed Hydro Quebec project would dam almost every river discharging into the James Bay, flooding a forested area equal to the size of Lake Ontario, displacing people and destroying thousands of animals. The New York Power Authority has signed a contract with Hydro-Quebec for 1000 mega-watts; New York State is therefore a prime contributor to this proposed environmental destruction. This surplus

electricity is primarily targeted for the New York City area.

We already have enough electricity, if we would only use the currently available conservation technologies to their most cost-effective potential. The Hydro Quebec-New York Power Authority contract, however, totally undermines the full development of our available energy conservation technology that we should be pursuing as a priority for its maximum environmental potential. There is absolutely no justification for destroying the James Bay territory, its people and animals for electricity that we don't even need!

Any CUNY student, New York citizen or not, has a stake and a responsibility in the Power Authority's venture. We all pay for electricity directly and indirectly. The Cree and Inuit urge all students to write letters to their New York State Senators protest the destruction of the James Bay Region of Northern Quebec and Ontario, the largest wilderness left in Eastern North America. Students are urged to help contribute to the cause of saving a valuable and priceless wilderness area which, once destroyed, can never be replaced. ☐

Julia Scalcione is a student of Philosophy.

Corrections: September 1990

Due to a production error, the date of Robert Gilleece's death was incorrectly printed. Mr. Gilleece passed away June 30, 1990. We extend our apologies to his family and friends.

The *Advocate* neglected to attribute two photographs. The photograph of Robert Gilleece (page 2) was taken by Foster Henry; the photograph of the CUNY terminals in the Mina Rees Library (page 3) was taken by Wayne Geist.

Due to an editorial error, a sentence in the first paragraph of Karlton Hester's article, "Mo' Better Reviews," was incorrect. The sentence should have read: "Many of the articles on the Persian Gulf crisis I have come across seem to have been written by jingoistic and self-righteous pep squads on the one hand; on the other hand, a surprisingly large number of other writers don't appear to be buying into this deceptive nonsense at all."

Part-Timers United New Adjunct Group Forming

By Thomas Smith

The official bargaining unit for CUNY faculty, the Professional Staff Congress, is once again negotiating a contract with CUNY for the next three years. The PSC officially (if not practically) is entrusted with representing part-time faculty, or adjunct lecturers, as well as full-time professors and tenured lecturers.

Many students at the Graduate School need to work as adjuncts in order to survive. With the multi-million dollar budget crisis passed on to CUNY by the New York City and State governments, the PSC will probably be asked to make some serious concessions at the bargaining table. Given the PSC's notoriously poor performance in the past when bargaining for adjunct wages and benefits, adjuncts are worried that the PSC may make a deal that will demand major sacrifices from them.

During the last contract negotiation three years ago, a group called the CUNY Part-time Instructional and Research Staff Union (PTU), of which I was a Steering Committee member, put pressure on the PSC by organizing a separate bargaining unit that would represent only part-timers and would deal directly with CUNY. Our efforts failed—largely due to CUNY's failure to provide us with the organizing information they were legally required to provide us. Nevertheless, the pressure forced the PSC and CUNY to come up with some important concessions. The amount of classroom hours required to obtain health

insurance benefits was lowered to six hours during two consecutive semesters at any one CUNY college. Combined with the scandalously low 5% increase in wages, this might not seem like much. There are quite a few adjuncts who do not work even two consecutive semesters at the same CUNY college. Indeed, the benefits "won" three years ago offers as much evidence of the PSC's incredible insensitivity to the adjuncts' condition as it demonstrates the potential adjuncts have when they organize. Given the current budget crisis, even these paltry victories may be lost this year.

More recently, a new group of adjuncts has been meeting at City College to consider strategies for keeping the PSC honest during the present contract negotiations. Calling themselves the Part-Timers United, they are seeking to build a grass-roots organizational structure that will enable adjuncts to discuss their grievances and to present them effectively to PSC representatives. This structure may also prove useful in electing reform candidates to the PSC leadership.

The Part-Timers United will hold a general meeting at the Graduate School on October 19th, in Student Center 10 in the basement mezzanine, from 6:00 to 8:00 P.M. All adjunct lecturers past, present and future are encouraged to attend. ☐

Thomas Smith, a contributing editor to the Advocate, studies political science.

Doctoral Students' Council Report

By Michael Glassman

The Doctoral Students' Council (DSC) met for the first time this year on September 18th. While attendance by the representatives was good, it was not what it should be. The meeting time was partly at fault for this though: a number of people wrote or called to say that they could not make it at the time scheduled. We have decided to put the meetings on a rotating basis so that most of the representatives can make at least some of the meetings. Next month's meeting will be on Wednesday, October 17th at 5:30 P.M. in SC 10. If a representative cannot make it, it is important that s/he find a proxy to come to the meeting. I would also encourage any other students who wish to attend the meeting to come. If you have a specific problem, contact the DSC office and we will try to put it on the agenda. Or maybe you just want to come and listen to what's going on at the Graduate Center.

The meeting was a mixture of old business and new ideas. Gordon Crandell, the Co-Chair for Business Affairs, told everybody about the impending deadline for chartered organizations. Any organization that wishes to remain chartered must submit a list with twenty signatures from three different departments along with a new constitution within a month's time. And of course everybody was concerned with money. Every program receives an allocation each semester for student-sponsored events. The allocation is at least \$150, and it may be more if your program is large. The only person who can collect this

money is the program representative, so if anybody out there hasn't seen this money for a few semesters, you know who to contact. As a last vestige of her old self Megan McCormick, Co-Chair for Business Affairs 1989-1990 proposed the new budget for a second vote by the DSC. It was passed, so at least we're doing better than the big guys up in Washington (although we don't have a Bushatross hanging around our necks).

There were a number of other issues discussed. The idea of naming the new Student Center after Robert Gilleece was put before the body of the DSC and passed. We will write a letter to President Proshansky to see how we can get this process started. For those of you who are new to this institution, Robert Gilleece, who passed away last summer, was Assistant Vice President for Student Services and Director of Financial Aid. In all my time in higher education I have never known a greater advocate for students in an administrative position. He will be sorely missed. We want to make sure that a man who cared so deeply about students will not be forgotten.

We also discussed how we can get some of the services that are offered to students publicized. Did you know, for instance, that you get free admission to the Museum of Modern Art when you show your CUNY I.D.? And did you know that Graduate Center students have special privileges at the main branch of the New York City Library, like discounts for photocopy-

Continued on following page.