

# Advocate

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## Higher Education Services Corporation Hires Private Company to Track Student Loan Defaulters.

- Andrea Zimmermann

New York State's Higher Education Services Corporation (HESC), which administers financial aid packages for students, has hired a private company whose specialty it is to track "deadbeats" to locate students who have defaulted on their student loans. The undisclosed private firm will conduct a world-wide search for students via their social security numbers, employment histories and tax records. Empowered by the federal government, the state through HESC's action may now legally garnish loan payments - plus interest - from the salaries of employed students who are currently in default.

What is not known at present is how the company will collect loan payments from students who are on Public Assistance or who receive Social Security Disability (SSD) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI). In the case of the latter, students who receive income support from the Social Security Administration have guaranteed protections by the federal government from financial seizures by debtors under Section 501(b) of the Social Security Act. However, the financial status of PA students is more tenuous because, as we have seen in the example of New York City which continues to tamper with the checks of welfare recipients, students have practically no federal protections against seizures at all.

According to the August 13, 1997 New York Post article, over \$8.2 billion in government backed student loans including interest, some of them dating back to the 1960s, have never been re-paid. Allison Newman, spokesperson for the Higher Education Services Corporation, explained that a newly created federal law, not specified, allows states to seize the earnings of students who reside and work in the US in order to force them to pay-off their educational debts. The federal government, however, will investigate the cases of US students working in foreign countries. "We don't care where [the company] finds them. This is another way we can go about getting the money. It's money that was borrowed [from US taxpayer's] and people promised to pay it back," said Newman.

HESC is specifically targeting students in New York State who attended public or private colleges and universities both in and out of state. In its exclusive investigation The Post estimated that in 1993 approximately twelve percent of NYS based student loans are still in default, according to data furnished by the US Department of Education. Outstanding student loans totaled over eight billion dollars in 1995-96. Within the past year alone student loan borrowing has increased by over \$1 billion - or fifteen percent over the previous year. The average student loan is \$4,000, payable in ten to thirty year terms. During the 1995-96 fiscal year, New York State was only able to collect about \$133.4 million. Precise totals on the exact number of students in default to date has not yet been tallied, but HESC believes that in monetary terms the figure is well over a million dollars.

## Italian-American Group Charges CUNY Discriminates.

- Mark Petras

In 1976, CUNY Chancellor Robert J. Kibbee designated Italian-Americans as an Affirmative Action category. In 1986, Chancellor Joseph S. Murphy reaffirmed that policy. In 1990 and 1992, however, the Italian-American Legal Defense and Higher Education Fund filed complaints with the Department of Labor alleging that CUNY was discriminating against Italian-Americans. The organization filed the complaints on behalf of more than 20 individuals who charged that CUNY had discriminated against them in employment because of their Italian ethnicity.

The complaints led to a lawsuit. The Italian-American Legal Defense and Higher Education Fund teamed up with Joseph V. Scelsa, Director of CUNY's John D. Calandra Italian-American Institute, to file a federal action against CUNY in court. The federal action, titled Scelsa v. City University of New York and Reynolds, alleged that CUNY discriminated against Italian-Americans in its employment practices. A settlement in January 1994 ended the federal action when the plaintiffs and defendants agreed to arbitrate their disputes. In the settlement, CUNY agreed to continue to treat Italian-Americans as an Affirmative Action category.

But Scelsa and the Italian-American Legal Defense and Higher Education Fund recently sued CUNY again in New York State Supreme Court for allegedly failing to live up to the agreement. They claimed that CUNY has "engaged in a concerted course of conduct aimed at limiting and preventing arbitration of the subject matter of the Department of Labor complaints, and that defendants have interposed artificial obstacles to arbitration." The plaintiffs also claimed that CUNY has failed to treat Italian-Americans as an Affirmative Action category.

In its decision, the court declared that the matter should go to arbitration, because both parties previously had agreed to settle their disputes based on the original agreement. The American Arbitration Society, a private agency of professional arbiters, will handle the dispute, said Joseph Seminara, attorney for the plaintiffs.

## Administrators Seek Staff Increase for Computing Service and Library.

- Mark Petras

This year the Manhattan Borough President's Office gave \$520,000 to the Graduate Center to buy 280 computers. As a result, the Graduate Center will have more computers available for faculty and student use when it moves to the B. Altman & Co. building on 5th Avenue. Not only will the library have more computers but certain floors throughout the building will have "hubs" of 10 to 16 terminals at which students and faculty can work, said Bruce Kohan, Vice President for Finance and Administration.

This increase in computers creates the need for more staff in the school's computing services, Kohan said. That is why Kohan and Provost Geoffrey Marshall have issued a proposal to the Vice-Chancellor's Office requesting a \$4 million increase in the budget to fund the creation of about 25 new staff positions in the new computer center and library.

The GSUC has been under-staffed in these areas for a long time, Marshall said. The Graduate Center's move to the larger new facility, with more computers, requires a staff increase. "I think it would be impossible to open the new building with the current staff," Marshall said. "They're already over-extended."

Marshall also said he believes that some funding - although perhaps not the entire requested amount - will be granted when the interim chancellor is appointed. Kohan said there might be a decision on the fund request by next semester. The positions that open up will be full-time and will last for at least 2 to 3 years.

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## Anti-Sweatshop Coalition Fights Corporate Greed.

- Mark Petras

A coalition of religious, human rights, labor, womens' and students' organizations across the country recently declared October 4th a "day of conscience to end child labor and sweatshop abuses." The day marks the beginning of a three-month effort during which the coalition will try to call public attention to worker exploitation by organizing vigils, candlelight marches, leafleting campaigns, inter-denominational services, and demonstrations in cities throughout the United States. The coalition aims to make consumers aware of sweatshop abuses so they will shop with their conscience during the holiday season.

The anti-sweatshop alliance also intends to send President Clinton a petition - signed by at least one million people - that reads: "We the People believe that there is a direct link between sweatshop abuses off-shore and the growth of sweatshops in the U.S., job loss and falling wages. We believe that in our global economy, human rights protections are every bit as important as corporate rights. We do not want U.S. based multinationals pitting the U.S. worker against the poor in the developing world in a race to the bottom competing over who will accept the lowest wages and benefits and the most miserable working conditions. We need to lift human rights standards around the world, not lower them. We affirm the dignity of life over corporate greed."

Continued on page 3



## ABC Has Insulted Our Intelligence.

- Mark Petras

One day I was sitting on the #9 train headed downtown. I did not have any books with me to read, so I spent my time glancing around at the people in the subway car. As my eyes wandered, they detected something that made my face crinkle up in anger. Instead of the advertisements for health-care and legal services that are usually posted above subway car windows, on this day I saw a series of advertisements that did not seem like advertisements at all. None of the ads contained pictures or graphics; each one consisted of a single sentence or phrase written in black letters on a plain yellow background.

One of the ads read, "You can talk to your wife anytime." Another said, "Scientists say people use 10% of their brains. We think that's too much." Another ad stated, "TV is good." I could not believe what I was seeing. The ads reminded me of the movie "They Live," in which aliens disguised as humans use subliminal forms of mind control to make working-class Americans toil for low wages, consume products and watch television in mental sluggishness. By brainwashing the masses in this way, the aliens in the movie maintain their control over America's wealth.

Do not misunderstand me. I am not much of a conspiracy theorist. I do not believe that ABC has any grand design of mind control behind its advertising campaign. But I do feel insulted by ABC's ads. I do not watch television to be cast into a state of mental inactivity. I watch television to see documentaries, news reports, political debates, etc. When I do watch situation comedies - namely Seinfeld and Cheers - I do so not to become mentally lethargic, but to add a humorous break to a long night of study or work.

A few weeks ago I called ABC and asked the company to send me some literature explaining the rationale behind the ad campaign. They never sent it, so I combed some newspapers and found an article discussing ABC's new advertisements. According to the article, ABC's purpose is to attract attention to their network in a funny, lighthearted way. But I could not believe that. Are people supposed to find it funny when a rich, powerful television network tells them they are dumb and should be even dumber?

A single man cannot bring down a corporation, so my boycott will be of no real significance. Nevertheless, I will not watch ABC anymore, until it apologizes to me for having insulted my intelligence.

## CUNY BOT's "Committee of Five" Excludes Faculty and Students from the Chancellory Selection Process.

- Andrea Zimmermann

A dispute erupted at the August 1997 Board of Trustees (BOT) meeting at CUNY Central when attendees learned that students and faculty will not be participants in the selection process of an interim chancellor for the university. On August 25th, 1997 CUNY's BOT met to supposedly formulate a preliminary committee to review candidate applications to temporarily fill the position vacated by the departure of W. Ann Reynolds. But much to the surprise and anger of the audience was the unexpected revelation that a "Committee of Five" - the group that would review applications - excluded certain representatives from the university constituency. What was perhaps more predictable, however, was that this committee, hand picked by Board Chairwoman Paolucci, not only convened sometime prior to the official announcement of the August 25th BOT meeting, without notifying the CUNY community for the anticipated purpose, but apparently a list of likely candidates from within the system had already been circulating among committee members in advance.

Paolucci's undisguised hostility toward the presence of faculty and students in the audience, not to mention some of the members of her own board who disagreed with her machinations, is shameful. A verbal altercation arose immediately after Paolucci announced that a Committee of Five was organized, comprised chiefly of Board members, and had actively been reviewing applications during early August. In previous instances when an interim chancellor was appointed, the Committee of Five used to include one faculty member and one student. Not this time, however.

On this occasion there was neither. University Student Senate (USS) Chair Ifeakor Potts immediately raised her objections to the undemocratic nature of the arrangement. She rightly stated that since students are the consumers of what the university has to offer under its educational purview, there must be student and faculty involvement on the committee to select a chancellor. She is unequivocally correct. Ms. Potts also added that she, as USS Chair, was never informed that a committee had already been convened and reviewing candidates' applications before the announced BOT meeting. She demanded from Paolucci: "When did they meet?", "Who submitted C.V.s?", and "Where can these be obtained?" Someone else other than Paolucci answered the USS Chair's question. "The Secretary of the Board of Trustees has copies of the candidates," grumbled one annoyed Trustee. To these and other queries, Trustee Crimmins concurred with Potts's concerns and insisted a resolution be placed before the Board to include faculty and students on the Committee of Five.

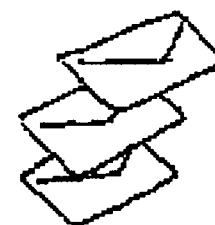
Paolucci did not care for this resolution whatsoever. In a manner that could only be charitably described as autocratic and dictatorial, Paolucci replied that she, "did not have to accept the resolution" submitted by

Trustee Crimmins because she is not "mandated" based on BOT governance guidelines to do so. Nevertheless, contrary to Paolucci's objections, a motion was submitted to expand the Committee of Five to include one student and one faculty member. One male Trustee also objected to the motion because it would "cripple operations" of the Board of Trustees if every committee issue came up for a vote concerning faculty and student representation. Another Board member complained he did not understand why it was even necessary to have students and faculty on any committee, but suggested rather begrudgingly that Paolucci vote on the resolution, to get it over with as if doing so would further waste the Board's time. A vote was taken and, behold, the resolution was defeated. So, at present, no faculty or student is represented on the Committee of Five.

What this scenario demonstrates is how insulted faculty and students are at the behind-the-scenes, closed door atmosphere of some Board of Trustees proceedings, much like the way a group of CEOs connives to illegally terminate a whistle-blowing employee. In light of Paolucci's conduct at the August 25th meeting, she smashed the foundation upon which "Robert's Rules of Order" are built. But this comes as no surprise to audiences that attend Board of Trustee meetings regularly and are familiar with Paolucci's arbitrary management style.

While it may be true that according to nebulous by-laws Paolucci is not required to seek faculty and student input in BOT matters, the choice was available to her but she unilaterally decided not to exercise that option. Why? Is Paolucci afraid she might lose control of Board members? It makes no real difference because a few of them openly dislike her anyway. Paolucci's behavior, along with the tacit complicity of a few "loyal" Trustees as evidenced by the above comments, if continued in the same mode and vein, could develop into a totalitarian environment where the CUNY community's relevance is completely eclipsed from the daily operations of the university. Just like the way things are run at a corporation. The trend in that direction has not gone unnoticed by faculty and students. When it comes to the hiring of a new chancellor - whether interim or permanent - the most important person who will lead the university into the next century, the involvement of CUNY's constituencies is mandatory and in accordance with any legitimate participatory democracy.

## Wanted!



Your opinions, essays, and articles! Please submit them in MS Word 5.1 on a Macintosh-formatted 3.5 inch disk to The Advocate, DSC Center, Room 400, 25 West 43rd St, New York, NY 10036

The City University of New York Graduate School and University Center  
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