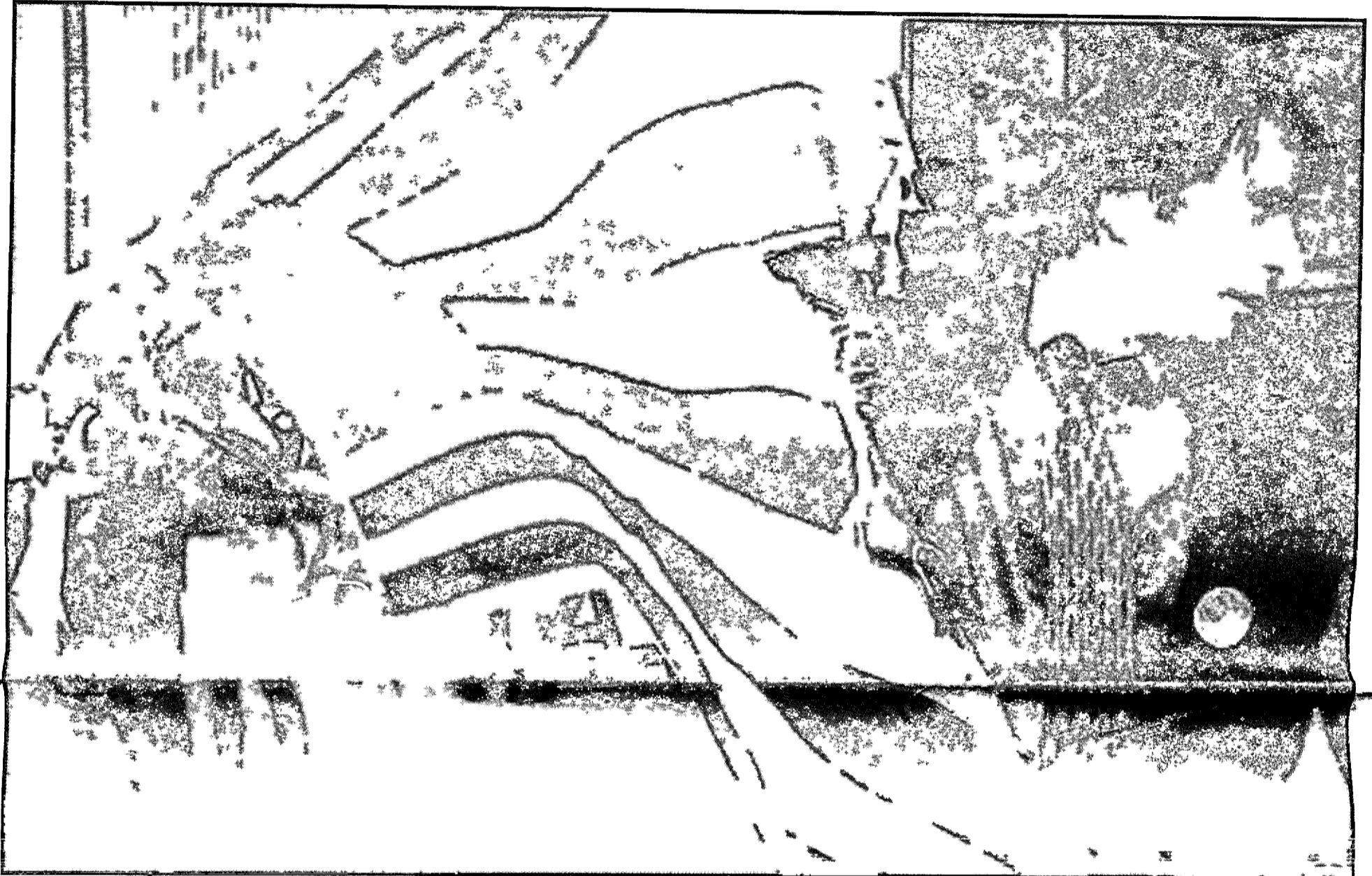


# PROVOCATE

CUNY GRAD CENTER

10/2000



SAMANTA BOX

## Americans Rally Behind Ralph Nader And LaDuke As Election Day Approaches

### Adjunct Organizing

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PROTEST IN PRAGUE, page 12

# UNION LAYS OUT BOLD CONTRACT PAY AND BENEFIT PARITY FOR ADJUNCTS

By Kristin Lawler

Adjuncts, our time has come. We've complained for years about the poverty wages, shoddy benefits, and bleak professional future that we face in our attempt to support ourselves teaching as we complete our Ph.D.s. Some of us have agitated and organized, fighting an uphill battle all the way. Well, the terrain of our struggle has been utterly transformed and we have upon us an historic opportunity to achieve a decent living and a real professional future. If we don't take advantage of it now, we're dead in the water. The desperate situation of grad students teaching college classes for ridiculously low premiums, thereby forming a job market full of sweated adjunct positions rather than good academic jobs, exists because year after year it has been solidified in the contract that determines wages, benefits and working conditions within CUNY. Not this time. The new leadership that recently took the reins of the union has put forth a set of bold, progressive demands for the 2000 contract. Central to the list of demands is an end to the two-tier wage system that gives adjuncts the scraps left over from negotiating pay and benefits for full-timers. I quote: "Adjuncts shall be eligible, on a pro-rated basis, for all the benefits, prerogatives, and opportunities granted in the collective bargaining agreement to full-timer members of the instructional staff." The implications of this are truly staggering, and are by no means limited to CUNY but will reverberate throughout the once-hallowed halls of academia.

This proposal demands that part-timers who teach at CUNY will no longer do the same work as full-time professors for a lower wage will—the rate will be the same and will include teaching hours as well as office hours and departmental assignments. And the demand for parity includes health benefits. Adjuncts who teach at least two courses per semester, regardless of funding source, will receive the same benefits as full-timers, including dental and disability insurance, and Graduate Fellows in all categories will finally be eligible for these benefits as well. If an adjunct who has health insurance sees his or her course load drop to just one class as a result of departmental decisions, he or she will remain covered. Also, the union is demanding that "CUNY Graduate Center doctoral students who perform work covered by this contract shall receive full tuition remission." CUNY will no longer have the dubious distinction of being the only university in the country that requires its teaching grad students to pay tuition.

Other demands address issues of adjunct job insecurity: after ten consecutive semesters of teaching, adjuncts will receive a Certificate of Continuous Employment, awarded retroactively at the inception of the contract; after two consecutive semesters, adjuncts must be offered appointments of at least one year; and after six consecutive semesters, adjuncts who are not reappointed must be given a written explanation of the reason. If, by the end of the semester, an adjunct has not received written confirmation of a position for the next semester, he or she will be eligible to receive unemployment compensation, uncontested by the university. And--get this!--if a scheduled course is canceled within

30 days of the start of classes, the adjunct will be paid anyway, for the whole course! Also, adjuncts will be entitled, after fourteen consecutive semesters of teaching at least two classes, to one semester of paid leave. Time to finish that dissertation! Three months full pay will be granted for parental leave or the adoption of a child. The list goes on and on. Check out the full text of the contract demands at the union's website: [www.psc-cuny.org](http://www.psc-cuny.org).

In the end, it will become just as expensive to hire an adjunct as is it to hire a full-time professor—so the job market we'll face when we complete our doctoral work is looking up as well. And the union is demanding not only that adjuncts be given real consideration for full-time lines when they come up, but also that an Incentive Fund be created to "encourage and aid departments in the hiring of CUNY adjuncts for full-time lines." All in all, what the union is laying down at the outset of these negotiations could dramatically improve the present and future situation for all of us, to say the least. Exciting as the union's new militance may be, however, strong demands from the union side of the table does not a good contract make. ~~Not automatically, anyway.~~ The force of the entire union membership must be behind the negotiators if they are to make these demands into the form of an actual contract—if the administration senses that the membership is not unconditionally committed to the demands, the negotiators won't have the juice they need

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