

DEMOCRACY AND POLITICS IN THE UFT

Preface to the 2014 reprint

The Coalition of New York City School Workers was active throughout the 1970s in the teachers union and local communities. The group emerged from the maelstrom of the late 60s, in particular the 1968 strike. The 1975 massive financial crisis carved an enormous hole in the school system that took 20 years to recover from. The union accepted the cuts, thus undermining the impact of the '75 strike over the cuts. How could a union function in this manner? In the wake of that crisis, the Coalition published a pamphlet in 1976 articulating its views of how the UFT was controlled by one party, Unity Caucus, and how that absolute control impacted on teachers and their schools.

Looking back from the vantage point of almost 40 years later, we thought it would be worthwhile to make an unedited version of *Democracy and Politics in the UFT* available to the current generation of teachers as a way to study what has changed and what has remained the same and offer it as a learning tool – as a sort of UFT 101 since so much about how the UFT functions has not changed. The pamphlet also reveals the way one group of activists attempted to articulate the issues revealing elements of astute analysis along with some naïve assumptions.

Many of the original CSW members were involved in the education debates over the past 2 decades through the formation of Education Notes (1997-present), Independent Community of Educators (2003), Grassroots Education Movement – GEM – 2009-2012) and Movement of Rank and File Educators (2013).

Democracy and Politics in the UFT is being reprinted in its original with no changes (other than graphics) in order to provide a snapshot of the state of the UFT and education c. 1976 and how one opposition group approached these issues. An updated version of this pamphlet by MORE is planned. Thanks to Vera Pavone for retyping and formatting.

In memorium to the late Paul Baizerman, Loretta Prisco, Gene Prisco, all of whom helped co-author this work.

Ira Goldfine, Vera Pavone, Norm Scott – July 2014

Introduction to the 1976 edition

WHO WE ARE

We are a group of New York City school workers who have been active unionists for the past several years. The focus of our activities has been within our schools, our local school districts, our school communities, and at the U.F.T. Delegate Assembly and other city-wide union meetings. We run in chapter elections and have served as union officers.

We are members of a number of groups which meet regularly and discuss problems within our schools and issues important to us as educators and workers (see final page for a list). In these groups we put out newsletters and leaflets which are distributed at schools, community school board meetings, delegate assemblies and other meetings and events. We are united in opposition to the present U.F.T. leadership, and in our belief in the necessity of a progressive program for our union to follow.

Last year we printed a pamphlet entitled *The Case Against Shanker*, which was distributed at the NYSUT and AFT conventions as well as in many of the city schools. This past fall we fought vigorously against the union's capitulation to the banking interests, spoke up at union meetings, and issued many leaflets during and after the strike urging a "no" vote on the contract and a militant fight back against the budget cuts in alliance with other workers.

The ideas we are putting forth in this pamphlet are a product of our experiences and struggles within the New York City school system. We would appreciate any information, ideas or comments.

INTRODUCTION

In the months and years to come, our school systems will be facing a never-ending series of attacks by government leaders and business interests. We are no longer in the era of the Defense Education Act, the nationwide effort to upgrade education, the poverty programs (a response to community pressure), and the massive government borrowing without which these programs might never have come into existence.

With our economy in crisis the banks, oil companies, airlines, defense industry, big corporate farmers—in short, all those whose influence over the government is in reality control over the government—are making sure that their profits are protected. It is this that has resulted in the severe financial crisis that has reached into every city, town and community of this country. The crisis has caused the layoffs of millions of workers, the bankruptcy of small businesses and farms, the shutting down of hospitals, the piecemeal destruction of public education, the increase in chaos and crime, and the growing misery and disaster for a rapidly enlarging number of people.

In the face of this onslaught, there has been an unfortunate tendency of groups of workers to isolate themselves from others and raise the narrowest of demands—only those which will benefit them and only them directly. Thus the library workers, firefighters, teachers, hospital workers, and various other community groups are all battling among themselves for crumbs, leaving untouched the vast wealth and resources that are continuously recycled in the pursuit of profit.

It has become clear to us in New York City that we must build a movement of working people—city workers, workers in private industry, unemployed, parents and city residents—that will fight for full funding for all needed services and for full employment with decent wages and working conditions for all. The building of this movement should be the major goal of our unions and our various city and community organizations.

One of the major obstacles to the building of this movement is the present leadership of our city unions and the policies and political outlook it promotes among the membership. Therefore, we the rank & file of our union must begin the long, difficult process of organizing ourselves into a power that is capable of forcing the union leadership either to change its present political direction (we seriously doubt our present leaders will make the necessary fundamental changes) or to be replaced. Through this struggle we must constantly expose how the policies, actions and inactions of the union leadership lead to isolation from our potential allies, rather than to the unity that is required in order to fight against those business interests that are the source of our common problems.

An opposition movement within our union must develop a clear political program that serves the interests of the membership. We can't fall into the trap of thinking that just any change or any new leadership is better for us, since it can turn out to be just as bad in the same or new ways.

But doesn't our union leadership represent the views and interests of union members? We feel that our union leadership has organized the U.F.T. into a body which they tightly control and manipulate. This gives them the ability to promote their policies with the least amount of opposition from the membership. While deliberately stifling any real democracy, they always try to portray the U.F.T. as a democratic institution, equating democracy with having the opportunity choose our leaders every two years (just as we choose our mayor, governor or President of the U.S.). Chapter chairpeople and other union officers often say: "I do what I want; if you don't like it, vote me out at the next election." This, we feel, is a mockery of democracy.

From the outset, any opposition movement must take on the task of democratizing our union—setting up structures and procedures that will give the rank and file the opportunity to have direct and constant ability to formulate union policy. If the membership were more involved and had more say, we feel that many of the policies and actions they recommended would be contrary to those of our present leadership. (For example, there would be a more serious struggle against the layoffs and cutbacks.)

In the following pages we expand on two main questions:

I. DEMOCRACY IN OUR UNION

How our union is presently run? How can we build a more democratic union?

II. The POLITICS OF OUR UNION

Where are our union leaders presently leading us? What should we be fighting for?

DEMOCRACY IN THE UNION

Chapter Organizing

Perhaps one of the most essential features of a strong, democratically-controlled union is the building of chapters that are active and that function in a democratic way. Our experiences have taught us that very few chapters are either active or democratic and that many chapters do not really function at all.

There are too many chapters where meetings are not held regularly, attendance is discouraged by meaningless agendas, staff has no input into agenda items, discussion is kept to a minimum, chapter chairpeople and delegates do not give complete and regular reports about meetings they have attended, chapters officers only present Shanker's view of things and know very little about what's going on, school problems are kept secret, important information is not presented to staff, etc.—in general overall ignorance and apathy prevail.

We think this overall pattern is not an accident, nor is it just that “teachers aren't interested” or “they won't come to meetings” as many chapter chairpeople and other union leaders always offer as an excuse. The fact is that the union leadership, which is under the tight control of Unity Caucus, has deliberately promoted the non-participatory, non-active, undemocratic chapters. They often refuse to call meetings, even when requested by staff. They limit the agendas to items of trivia. They try to prevent discussion on controversial questions. They don't inform either themselves or fellow staff about what's happening. They don't elicit viewpoints from chapter members. Probably what's most discouraging to staff is that the chapter or the chapter chairperson doesn't even deal with important school problems. Individual grievances are kept quiet and not discussed at union meetings, even when more than one individual faces the same problem. Chapter chairpeople often tell us that grievances are private and should not be publicized. Instead of the pursuing of just grievances, deals are made and staff is kept divided and weak. Then there are many schools where union members are afraid to speak up at chapter meetings because chapter chairpeople or others report back to their principals.

Our union is 16 years old and we have a large staff of organizers and leaders, but it is clear they don't put chapter organizing as a priority.

It is our experience that well-organized chapters lead to a more active, informed and militant membership. We would like to offer the following recommendations:

I. CHAPTER CONSTITUTION

Each chapter should have a chapter constitution. Its purpose is to insure that chapters are run democratically and responsibly no matter who is elected, and also to encourage staff involvement in school and union matters. The constitution should deal with basic chapter policy concerning:

- a. Election procedures for chapter chair, delegate, para rep, alternates, etc.
- b. Meetings—how often, when, rules governing, minutes.
- c. Formation of committees:

- * A *consultation committee*—to meet regularly with the principal
- * A *liaison committee* committee—to meet regularly with parents
- * An *executive committee*-to help chapter chairpeople between meetings

These committees should consist of chapter chairperson, delegate, para rep and other reps (grade, subject, etc., depending on kind and size of school), and meetings should be open to all staff.

d. Allocation of union time—The chapter chairperson by contract is allotted four periods a week. We think all union affairs shouldn't be carried out by one person but tasks should be distributed among the executive committee. The chapter should decide how to allocate the 4 periods a week (e.g., one per month for delegate, one per month for para rep).

e. Procedures on grievances—Chapters must insure that grievances are filed and pursued properly and that chapter chairpeople support individuals, groups or the entire staff on any contract or other legal violation.

f. Responsibilities of the chapter chairperson, delegate, para rep—see below.

II. CHAPTER MEETINGS

The heart of a chapter is the meeting. A well-organized, open, serious, democratically run meeting does not just happen. It requires a great deal of effort to achieve. There is no substitute for full exchange of ideas, encouragement of all viewpoints, presentation of all information and full discussion of problems.

In many chapters, chapter chairpeople claim that they don't need meetings because they go around and talk to people. But this does not enable staff to hear what others have to say, and insures that only one viewpoint is being circulated and promoted.

We suggest the following:

- a. Meetings should be held regularly once a month, preferably before each Delegate Assembly so that members can hear, discuss, and where appropriate vote on agenda issues and make recommendations on proposals and questions it wants raised at the Delegate Assembly.
- b. Additional meetings should be scheduled whenever necessary to deal with school problems, city-wide events, political events that relate to our jobs and work, etc.
- c. Agendas should include:
 1. School issues raised by the chapter chairperson, delegate, para rep, or any chapter member.
 2. Delegate Assembly agenda items.
 3. Reports on any city, district or school meetings attended by chapter representatives. Agendas should be open and the chapter chairperson should elicit agenda items from staff BEFORE the meetings, and then should try to insure that items are covered.
- d. 100% attendance should be sought. Meetings should be publicized in advance and reminders given. Paraprofessional input into agenda and para attendance is essential.
- e. The chapter chairperson, delegate and para rep must report fairly, accurately and objectively on all meetings they attend. The union leaders and reps, to the best of their ability, should try to present the different positions on each issue and should encourage full discussion, after which members should be polled.

III. RESPONSIBILITIES OF CHAPTER OFFICERS

A. Attending meetings: The chapter chairperson, delegate and paraprofessional rep should attend all city-wide, district and school meetings they are delegated to, and should report either verbally or in writing to all union members. In addition, whenever possible, they should inform staff in advance of upcoming meetings and their agendas. If they are unable to attend, they should try to insure that alternates go.

B. Chapter officers should try to establish communication with other chapters in the district on matters of mutual concern.

C. Chapter officers must be available to answer questions and offer assistance to staff. They should be aware of what's going on in the school and should be alert to instances of unfair treatment and violations of contract. The chapter chairperson should encourage rather than discourage staff involvement, concern and willingness to struggle.

D. Grievances: It should be the responsibility of the chapter chairperson to let staff know when their rights are being violated—and not merely wait for someone to initiate a grievance. If more than one person has a similar grievance, if there is a violation of chapter rights, or in cases where individuals are afraid or are in no position to come forward, chapter grievances should be filed. All just grievances should be encouraged and pursued. The chapter chairperson should keep staff informed about the progress of grievances and should organize pressure campaigns upon the district office or central board when contractual time limits are not adhered to.

IV. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHAPTER CHAIRPERSON AND ADMINISTRATION

The chapter chairperson's primary responsibility is to the teachers and paras, not to the administration. Any violation of staff rights should be the business of the chapter chairperson. In far too many schools chapter chairpeople have a relationship with the administration that harms individual staff and weakens the chapter as a whole. In these schools the chapter chairperson, instead of acting as a responsible union leader who defends the right of staff, acts as a go-between at best and at worst an agent of the principal. Thus, staff rights are flagrantly and regularly violated, individual grievances aren't filed or pursued, collective grievances are unheard of, conflicts are covered up, staff is uninformed of their rights, unequal treatment by supervisors is unchallenged and staff is deceived into thinking that harmony exists, while decisions are made by deals between principals and the chapter chairperson. As a result, staff members are helpless in defending themselves; chapters have no power to struggle for their needs and rights; and schools are run in an autocratic dictatorial way by the administration with the willing cooperation of the union leader.

Chapter chairpeople must see to it that administration does not curtail our contractual rights, our right to fair and equal treatment, our right to participate in decisions made in the school, and our freedom to exercise our constitutional rights of free speech and free assembly.

The chapter chairperson should not be able to make any agreements with the administration without the knowledge and consent of the membership.

V. OTHER CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

A. The chapter should encourage staff attendance at Community School Board meetings, meetings with parents and U.F.T. Committee meetings (citywide elementary, junior high school, high school). Setting up committees (standing or rotating) for these purposes might be helpful.

B. Every chapter should try to put out a school newspaper and should welcome participation of all union members.

C. There should be a regular meeting within each school of representatives from all different unions within the building—custodial workers, school and aides and U.F.T. members.

VI. DISSENT WITHIN THE CHAPTER

In order for rank & file members to make decisions, we must have the opportunity to hear and discuss the different views on the issues that confront us. Unity Caucus members and other chapter chairpeople often present one viewpoint—Shanker's—on all questions, as if it's the only legitimate viewpoint. They generally try to prevent opposition views from getting presented and discussed in the following ways:

A. They often try to avoid holding meetings when there is a vocal opposition, or call meetings at the last minute in order to discourage attendance. When meetings are held, they try to control the agenda, manipulate procedures, focus on minor matters, and filibuster in order to ward off full discussion on controversial issues.

B. Rather than call meetings, they often persuade people of their positions by going around the school and talking privately or by calling members on the phone. This is especially evident during election time. Unity Caucus chapter chairpeople have been known to call up teachers and paraprofessionals and threaten them with the loss of positions, services and jobs if they don't vote the right way.

C. During the past several years, opposition groups within the union have had their leaflets or newsletters pulled out of staff letterboxes by chapter chairpeople, district reps and other Unity Caucus people numerous times.

Our right to use mailboxes to distribute literature has been confirmed in many grievance decisions (the most important—the 3rd Step decision—Baizerman vs. Board of Ed, 1974). These grievances had not been supported by the U.F.T. leadership, and have involved a long, uphill struggle against our union leadership as well as administrators. Collusion between them has been frequent, since their interests are the same—to stifle criticism of their actions or policies.

According to the U.F.T. Constitution: "There shall be at least six meetings a year in all chapters containing more than 2 members. Additional meetings shall be held when called by the chapter chairman or at the request of 1/3 of the members of the chapter." (Art. IX, Section 5) We suggest that union members make use of the union constitution to call meetings when chapter chairpeople refuse to do so.

District Organizing

The role of the District rep

In their jobs as full time organizers, the district reps in each of our 32 school districts should be responsible for promoting democracy and active unionism between chapters and the district leadership, between the district and central leadership, and to assist chapter chairpeople in building active, democratic chapters.

How can this best be accomplished? As a start, district reps should make regular visits to each chapter in the district in order to:

1. Help them organize and function democratically (see that meetings are held regularly, that the school is represented at district and city-wide meetings, etc.);
2. Hold discussions and poll chapter sentiments on district and citywide union policy;
3. Represent the viewpoints and recommendations of the various chapters at the executive board, and try to see that executive board policies reflect the will of the local membership;
4. Be aware of a school's problems and be ready to act quickly and effectively on behalf of staff where problems exist (e.g., supervisor harassment of individuals, misuse of positions, etc.);
5. Bring information to the schools and answer questions from staff.

Staff in most schools are generally kept ignorant about how our union functions and are consciously excluded from formulating union policy. Even the most pressing questions on our minds (frozen monetary gains, hiring of subs, layoffs, seniority, assigning of prep periods, what's really in our contract) go unanswered. From listening to

Shanker's weekly radio program and attending "Meet the President" sessions, it is evident that chapter and district leaders are not fulfilling the function of answering these basic questions.

In order to facilitate communication among chapters and strengthen membership policy-making in the district, we recommend:

1. Monthly meetings of all elected union officers (chapter chairpeople, delegates, para reps) open to all staff members, and held at times when all staff can attend. (Meetings are now limited to only chapter chairpeople and are often held during school time.) These meetings should deal with school and district problems (most schools within a district have many similar situations and problems). Agendas for these meetings should be put out in advance and should be posted on union bulletin boards. There should be objective reports on executive board meetings for the purpose of discussion and decision making. These reports should not consist solely of executive board propaganda speeches, but should involve an honest presentation of the issues, an appraisal of the executive board positions, a full discussion of each important issue, and a polling of chapter reps. Suggestions and proposals from these district meetings must be taken to the executive board.

2. Multi-school or district-wide grievances should be filed where similar violations of the contract exist (assigned preps, no subs, etc.). School-wide grievances should be encouraged. Far too many times the same grievance is filed by different individuals in different schools, and school-wide or district-wide grievances are not filed. This results in delays and the weakening of our position, since it keeps us ignorant of what's going on and divided from other chapters. Many teachers hesitate to file individual grievances for fear of harassment or causing divisions among staff. If there is a similar grievance in more than one school in district, a second step grievance should be filed immediately. Every chapter chairperson should be present at Step 2 hearings of district-wide grievances.

3. There should be a district level union executive committee, elected by chapter chairpeople. The tasks of this committee should include:

a. Planning to carry out district union policy as formulated by the membership.

b. Keeping a check on the district rep in order to insure that district decisions reflect the will of the membership, instead of the directives of the union leadership.

c. Meeting regularly with the district superintendent to discuss union and educational matters which have been brought up at chapter and district meetings, including any severe problems within a school.

d. Organizing a district-wide newsletter that encourages full participation of all union members in discussing union policies and crucial questions that relate to union matters, and reports on the results and progress of all district and important citywide grievances.

e. Calling at least 4 district-wide union meetings a year for discussion of issues and sharing experiences, ideas and plans among the membership.

f. Setting up procedures for selecting school board candidates for union endorsement. This would include arranging public forums where candidates could be questioned by staff on their views, and polling of district union members.

4. There should be direct contact between chapter members and district rep. Presently, chapter members communicate with most district reps only through their chapter chairpeople.

How Unity Caucus District Reps Function

We have found that district union activity generally includes none of the above-mentioned suggestions. Most of the activity of the district reps serves to discourage rather than promote democracy and active union participation. In fact, the main function of the district rep within our union is to promote union leadership-Unity Caucus control over our districts and chapters.

District reps are responsible not to the rank & file within the chapters (they do not act as a response to chapter mandates and viewpoints) but only to the union leadership. Their number one task is to carry out the directives of

the leadership. These directives themselves are formulated not by the rank & file, but by a handful of people who make all the important decisions that affect our union and us. This handful of people are the leaders of Unity Caucus. The district rep is bound not only by executive board, but also by Unity Caucus “discipline” (all the district reps are members of Unity Caucus). What this means is that once decisions are finalized at the executive board level, then only the executive board opinion on issues and policy can be presented to the rank & file, and any opposition is covered up. (For example, during contract negotiations there were supposedly many district reps opposed to the final contract offer, but once a majority was reached at the executive board then all the district reps were compelled to campaign actively for a “yes” vote.)

District reps attempt to control their districts for the Unity Caucus leadership in the following ways:

1. They limit the information that filters down from the central leadership to the chapters in a district.
2. They unilaterally decide what actions are to be taken and who will take them. This includes calling for district-wide meetings, participation or non-participation at demonstrations or community school board meetings, etc. In general they try to put the lid on protests and complaints about administration, which often means discouraging just grievances.
3. They often try to limit or eliminate opposition viewpoints within the district. District reps have openly interfered in chapter affairs: taking active part in school elections in order to defeat candidates who oppose Shanker’s policies; slandering opposition people (“they’re anti-union”, or “they’re crazy radicals”). In some districts they have attempted to interfere with the dissemination of literature opposing official union leadership policy either by pressuring chapter chairpeople or by pulling things out of mailboxes themselves.
4. They pressure individual chapter chairpeople to fall into line, through promises of favors or threats of non-assistance.
5. In some districts they are an integral part of the patronage system within the district. Paraprofessional jobs, assistant principal appointments, district office positions, recertification, excessing, etc., often result from deals made between the district reps and the district office.
6. During the school board elections, it is the district reps and some chapter chairpeople who decide which candidates the union is going to endorse. Teachers, paras and delegates take no part in deciding who in the district the union should support or on what basis to support people.

District Rep Elections

One of the ways the union leadership insures its tight control over the district rep is through the process of selecting the rep. A district rep is elected by the chapter chairpeople in a district, not by the rank & file members, who have no input whatsoever into the district rep election. According to union rules, chapter chairpeople have weighted votes depending on how many chapter members they represent. Yet the membership is not even polled by their chapter chairpeople before the votes are cast, nor are the chapter chairpeople held accountable to their chapters on their votes. (We know of cases where chapter chairpeople have voted contrary to the chapter’s wishes when the membership had been given the chance to express their choice.) Union rules mandate that the district rep be chosen only from a list of present or past chapter chairpeople (who need the signatures of five incumbent chapter chairpeople for endorsement). This, of course, disqualifies 99.9% of the membership from candidacy and even disqualifies most chapter chairpeople who find it extremely difficult to get other chapter chairpeople to oppose the official union leadership choice (especially since most chapter chairpeople are in Unity Caucus and are subject to caucus discipline). Thus, most district reps are not elected, but are chosen by Unity Caucus, and in rare times when there is an election, it involves a power struggle between various Unity Caucus candidates who have little or no real political disagreements.

In short, throughout the city, the district rep is little more than a political hack and a tool of the Unity Caucus union leadership.

We propose that district rep candidacy be open to all union members and that the only requirement be a reasonable number of signatures of district union members. There should be direct voting of district reps by all union members within a district. Candidates should run on platforms that clearly demonstrate their positions on the issues affecting the school and the union. There should be meetings set up in each school or on a district-wide basis where staff could hear and question candidates. We feel that this process would not only be more democratic, but would insure a district rep who is more responsive to the needs and will of his or her constituency.

The Delegate Assembly

According to the U.F.T. Constitution the Delegate Assembly (DA) is the legislative arm of our union. Accordingly, it should be an active decision-making body. Throughout the years, President Shanker has demonstrated that independent decision-making by the DA (independent of the executive board or Unity Caucus) is almost impossible. We think it's important to list some of the ways in which Shanker and his Unity Caucus wield control over the DA.

1. Representation is at a 1:60 ratio (it used to be 1:10). This means that most schools (except high school and some junior highs and intermediate schools) have only one delegate who is often the Unity Caucus choice. We have seen year after year how in many chapters when there has been an anti-Unity or anti-Shanker representative, Unity Caucus gets to work to try to defeat him or her. District reps and chapter chairpeople within or friendly to Unity Caucus intervene in chapter elections on behalf of their candidate and against certain or potential opposition. We know of many elections that were held illegally, and we know of several cases where staff were strong-armed into voting for the Unity candidate.
2. The 75-member executive board attends and votes at every DA. This presents Shanker with an automatic 75 votes. Shanker often calls on his executive board to answer opposition arguments or to present motions to end discussion when he wants it ended. This has a very limiting effect on the democratic process.
3. Most delegates do not attend the DA regularly. There are about 1400 delegates. No more than 400 to 500 attend DAs regularly. A great many chapters are totally unrepresented. Many chapter chairpeople double as delegates. Some schools don't even know there is a DA, since the chapter chairperson, a Unity Caucus faithful, merely sends in his or her name as delegate and never goes. This unrepresentative nature of the DA makes it all the more easy for Shanker to manipulate and control it.
4. Many, if not most delegates who do attend, rarely meet with their staff to elicit viewpoints or bring back information. There is very uneven development among chapters, with some meeting regularly, discussing DA agenda, making proposals, etc., and some meeting rarely or not at all. (As we note in our section on the chapter, we feel that discussions on agenda items should take place before each DA within each chapter, and that members should be polled.) Delegates should be bound on the way to vote, and should carry chapter resolutions and statements to the DA, but should also have the leeway to present alternative positions. Objective reporting on what occurs should be written and distributed to the entire staff.
5. During the course of the DA, President Shanker often comes late. Then he filibusters for a long time through his President's report and his answers to questions. He also uses other executive board members to filibuster. This uses up valuable time and keeps actual discussion and questioning to a minimum. It also places questioners in the position of disrupters or time wasters, since after much time listening to filibustering many delegates want to or have to leave.
6. Control over the agenda:
 - a. In spite of the struggle by some delegates for many years, the executive board still refuses to send the agenda in sufficient time to delegates so that it can be discussed at chapter meetings. We feel that 10 days before the DA would give both the executive board and staff the needed time to get their respective tasks accomplished. (At the January 1976 DA Shanker presented delegates with the new executive board position on seniority at the meeting for approval by delegates, no advance notice given. How could the delegates possibly make such an important decision on such short notice and without any knowledge of what their staffs would want, especially since the new position was in direct contradiction to the union's previous policy?)

b. The executive board is extremely arbitrary in the way they formulate the agenda. They often put items on the agenda that serve their own political needs while leaving off the most pressing issues of the day. (At the January 1976 DA the issue of the layoffs of 2,000 teachers was not even on the agenda.) We have also seen how the executive board can get agenda items they don't agree with voted down through parliamentary maneuvering. (For example, at the Jan. '76 DA they offered a substitute motion on a proposal calling for due process guarantees, since they couldn't openly oppose the original proposal, yet they wanted to make sure it wasn't passed. The substitute motion had very little to do with the original motion except it dealt with the same broad topic, and they knew the delegates wouldn't oppose it.)

c. The executive board has restricted the ability of chapters and delegates to present resolutions to the DA by ruling that any resolution of more than three sentences must be printed up in sufficient quantity for every delegate. Under the guise of saving valuable time the union leadership has virtually silenced all delegates who don't have access to xero or mimeo machines.

d. Our union leadership is arbitrary on what has to be passed by the DA and what doesn't. Many bills for legislative lobbying are on the agenda while others aren't. For example, the executive board in the name of the union took a position on the Stavisky-Goodman bill, pushed it in the legislature, held a rally, reported on it, and then, after the fact, put it on the agenda a month later as an item to be discussed.

e. It is almost impossible for delegates (especially those Shanker recognizes and knows to have opposing viewpoints) to get anything on the agenda, including chapter resolutions, discussions about layoffs, etc. A delegate needs 2/3 of the body to get an item on the present agenda. If the executive board is against it they vote as a bloc, which means a delegate then needs the support of about 3/4 of the remaining delegates (since so few attend) just to get the item on the agenda for discussion.

7. Shanker is careful whom he calls on during discussion so as to manipulate it his way (he knows his faithful supporters and many of his opponents). He often uses sarcasm or is sharp, and in general tries to isolate critical delegates from the delegate body. The members of the executive board sometimes join in with jokes and other forms of harassment.

In spite of this, there are occasions when items are passed at the DA against the will of the union leadership—and then we find out that the executive board will not implement these DA decisions. Two examples:

a. Several years ago the DA passed a resolution calling on the union to wage a campaign for the impeachment of then President Nixon. After repeated questions at several DAs regarding the matter, Shanker said that the union could not impeach the resident, only the Congress could do that.

b. During preparation for contract demands last spring, the delegates passed several demands to be taken to negotiations that wouldn't have cost additional monies but would have helped to protect the memberships' basic rights (e.g., grievants automatically win decisions that are not heard or responded to within contractual time limits; class size grievances must be school-wide grievances in order to prevent harassment by principals, etc.). These vital protective demands were probably not even taken to the negotiating table by the union leadership.

Shanker's use of the DA as a rubber stamp for his political policies is always evident when it comes to giving COPE support for political or school board candidates. During the last school board campaign, delegates were asked to endorse hundreds of school board candidates whom they knew little or nothing about, whole lists at a time. With little or no knowledge about the candidates, without the input of chapter members, and, most essential, without any real criteria to judge these candidates on, the delegates had no choice but to vote for those "highly recommended candidates" on blind faith. When delegates raised objections on specific candidates (he voted for the Taylor Law, or he's anti-teacher) an executive board member invariably answered "but he's good on other issues" or "he's really a friend of teachers". Thus, the DA rubber stamped the expenditures of hundreds of thousands of COPE dollars on school board candidates last spring who this fall during our strike and after did nothing to promote the interests of school workers or to protest the severe cuts imposed on district budgets. (After the school board elections, Shanker claimed that 26 out of the 32 school boards were "UFT-elected".) And let's not forget the COPE money down the drain on behalf of Javits, Carey, Beame, Marchi—other "friends of teachers".

So, although Shanker often claims that he has no choice but to follow the will of the DA (he has said it on almost every radio program this year), we can see that this will is none other than his and his followers at the DA.

In the interests of making our delegate assembly a more representative, democratic body, we recommend that:

1. The executive board should not be voting members of the DA and since they have already participated in formulating and recommending agenda items, their role at the DA should be as observers. (They've already voted at the executive board, and executive board recommendations have a great deal of weight. Why should they be allowed to vote again?)
2. The ratio of delegates to union members should be 1:25 within a school with at least 2 per school.
3. Alternate delegates should be elected in each chapter, who would attend and vote at DAs when the regular delegate is unable to attend.
4. Chapter chairpeople should not be allowed to be delegates.

The Para Rep

Each school that has paraprofessionals is supposed to have a para school representative who should be part of the executive committee of the chapter. Para reps should be familiar with the problems that paras face and should see that the chapter responds at meetings, during grievances, etc., to para needs. Unfortunately this is rarely ever done. The union leadership has relegated paras to second-class roles within the chapter as well as within the union as a whole.

Para reps should attend the monthly para rep assemblies to find out information and to represent the wishes of the paras in their school. These para rep assemblies, which are not mandated by union constitution and have no official standing are often poorly attended. They often consist of nothing more than long speeches by Velma Hill, para head, and a handful of questions to promote a democratic atmosphere. The speeches of Hill and para leader Florence Fidell often belittle the problems of paras (large number of layoffs, totally inadequate wage) while extolling the virtues of the union leadership. At the February 1976 para rep assembly, when Velma Hill said that 2,000 paraprofessionals had been laid off and there would be more layoffs this September, a para rep got up and said "This is the first time we heard that after all these months." Instead of offering paraprofessionals a real forum for discussion of issues and problems, the union leadership fosters para participation by offering door prizes and raffles.

The only place paraprofessionals have the opportunity to participate in city-wide union affairs is at the delegate assembly (the "teacher" DA) where about 100 at-large members are allowed as member-voters.

Para rep assemblies should be official union bodies. They should make recommendations to the executive board, and proposals passed at the para rep assembly should be submitted to the DA, whether or not the executive board approves them.

Para representation at the DA should be increased to reflect the ratio of paras to teachers in the union.

Most important, paras should be given the opportunity to decide how they can be given more voice in union affairs. Present structures and procedures are unacceptable.

The Executive Board

Since presenting the illusion of democracy within the U.F.T. is important to President Shanker, the role of the executive board is crucial to his rule. We have seen above how the executive board plays a dominant role in the delegate assembly and how they control the 32 school districts.

Who is the executive board? Comprised of the highest U.F.T. officials and all the district reps, the executive board contains both old time Shanker associates and recent appointees. However, young or old, male or female, black, brown or white, they all fulfill the same function—that is, to disseminate, promulgate, and propagandize the

Shanker-Unity Caucus line on all major issues. Although the union goes through the charade of “electing” district reps (see above) and other executive board members (during U.F.T. elections), we all know that executive board members are essentially appointed by Shanker and are therefore responsible only to him.

Whatever differences exist among the executive board members, we know them to be of the smallest kind. Real dissent is non-existent because it’s never tolerated. Everyone on the executive board is a member of Unity Caucus, Shanker’s tightly-run political group within the union. Unity Caucus discipline means that once the “line” is set, all must conform. We saw this during contract negotiations when executive board members, no matter how they had felt about the contract, had to go around campaigning for a “yes” vote. (Some district reps had originally opposed the settlement.) Or when the inner circle of union leaders establish a position on seniority, the executive board is expected to push the latest position among the membership.

As influential as the executive board is within our union there is among the executive board an even smaller decision-making body—the Administrative Committee (Ad Com). We know very little about the Ad Com except that it consists of the nine union officers, including Shanker, and that it is a guiding force within the executive board. Chapter chairpeople and delegates received minutes of Ad Com and executive board meetings only once so far this year, months after they took place, and these minutes consist solely of motions; they don’t give us any idea of what the different positions were and who voted how. Shouldn’t the “open ballot” (see section on Conventions) be open information to union members as well as to leaders? Shouldn’t we know where our district reps and other executive board members stand on the issues that are voted upon?

Every important decision within our union is made entirely by the executive board. When Shanker had the executive board expanded to its present number of 75, and when the executive board was incorporated into the Delegate Assembly (see above) their power was magnified many times over, and Shanker’s control over the union was solidified.

We feel that the executive board, in order to make decisions based on the will of the membership, must be a representative body. District reps should be elected by rank & file members in a district, not chosen by Unity Caucus and rubber-stamped by chapter chairpeople as is present practice (see Election of District Reps above). Other executive board members should be elected on the basis of proportional representation, so that minority positions are represented. Minutes of each executive board meeting should be sent out regularly after each meeting to chapter chairpeople, delegates and para reps in every school.

Grievances

Although the union claims to back all grievances on Steps 1 and 2, this is not really done. Many grievances are discouraged at first and second step by chapter chairpeople and district reps on the basis that they’re “unwinnable”. (“Unwinnable” is a term used by union leaders whenever they don’t *want* to support a grievance.) We have found supposedly unwinnable grievances (such as the right to use the mailboxes) to be winnable if they are pursued.

At Step 3 and Arbitration, the union leadership decides which grievances they’ll support and which they’ll drop. This leads to numerous grievances for “per session” (after school) teachers, many of whom are chapter chairpeople and Unity Caucus members, while other important grievances are not backed at third step or arbitration (e.g. hiring of subs on a daily basis).

We have also seen how grievances not supported by the union leadership get shunted aside by the Board, thus violating contractual time limits. It often takes individuals months to get a grievance hearing at the Board. (The Board’s excuse has been that there are not enough hearing officers. They of course choose as priorities those grievances the union leadership presses.)

It is our experience that union reps, when they do not really want to pursue a grievance, generally present a weak case. Therefore, we feel that staff should have the right to bring in any teacher from the city to represent them on any step, particularly when the union won’t back them in the way they wish. We should also have the right to bring a lawyer in at any step. Union leadership control over the grievance procedures must be opened up if the rank & file are to get full justice at these hearings which are already so biased against us because it is the administrators who judge us.

It is crucial that the results of *all* third step grievances be available to all union members. The U.F.T. leadership in the NYSUT paper and other publications reports only on grievances it has supported and wishes to publicize. (We still have not seen one reference in the *New York Teacher* to the fact that all staff members have the right to communicate with one another through their mailboxes without the permission of the principal, an important basic staff right. We also are wondering whether or not the new *Chapter Chairman's Handbook* will reflect the Board's ruling, or will it continue to claim dishonestly as it did in the 1973 edition that only chapter chairmen have this right?)

The results of all third step grievances and arbitration decisions should be sent to every chapter chairperson (supposedly every principal gets this information immediately). In addition, every third step or arbitration victory for union members must be publicized in the NYSUT paper whether or not it received the endorsement of the union leadership.

Newspapers, Public Relations

Hundreds of thousands of dollars of our dues money are spent annually for the union leadership's propaganda machinery (in spite of the union's financial problems). Thus, we have (1) The NYSUT newspaper—the *New York Teacher*. Except for a few letters to the editor and the election issue once a year, there are no minority viewpoints presented. (2) A weekly ad in the *New York Times* at \$150,000 a year of our dues. (3) A new newsletter by the U.F.T. in New York City called *United Action*. (4) A new radio program on Station WEVD. (5) A new "Chapter Newsletter" sent out to the schools, which despite its title has little or nothing to do with chapter news, chapter views, chapter questions or chapter problems. It is instead just one more (expensive) vehicle for our leadership to utilize to promote its views, rationalize its policies, cover up its failures and show that it cares.

In recent months it has become clear that Shanker can no longer rely on many chapter chairpeople and the traditional union propaganda apparatus to deal with the growing dissatisfaction and questioning within our chapters. Isn't the new "Chapter Newsletter" an attempt by the leadership to head off the development of independent chapter activity and the establishment of real chapter newsletters written by and for chapter members?

We feel that all newspapers, newsletters, radio programs, paid ads, etc., that are done in the name of the union, should reflect the sentiments of the rank & file union members, not just the views of Shanker or Unity Caucus. The NYSUT paper, as well as all union publications, radio programs, etc., should present accurate news articles and information, rather than public relations profiles of our various union leaders. It should also be open to the viewpoints of rank & file union members, including dissident chapters or dissident groups within the union, on the issues that are important to us: how to fight the layoffs, seniority, bilingual education, shortened school day, the use of pension funds, the contract, uniting with other unions, etc.

Our union leadership reserves for itself not only the last word, but the **only** word. Years ago, when teachers' groups wanted to pay to take out anti-war ads, they were refused, on the basis that such ads are political in nature. Last fall the Brandeis High School chapter submitted a paid ad to the union paper calling for a "no" vote on the contract, and the leadership refused it on the grounds of its being "too political".

It is obvious that "too political" is anything the union leadership doesn't agree with, since, at the same time the union refused the ad for the vote "no" position, they devoted several issues of the *New York Teacher* to promoting the leadership's vote "yes" position.

This domination by Unity Caucus of the entire communications and public relations network is totally undemocratic and self-serving. We mustn't allow our union machinery to be used in this way at either our dues' or our political expense.

"Unity" and Dissent

We've often heard the comment that dissent means divisiveness and this weakens our union. We feel that in order for a union to be a strong, healthy, united organization there must be a free exchange of ideas, and union members

should have the opportunity to hear different viewpoints and discuss and weigh alternatives. The more people know, the more prepared they are to be responsible, active unionists. A union that keeps its members uninformed or misinformed weakens itself.

When opposition or minority viewpoints are stifled, this is a violation, not only of the rights of those in opposition, but also of everyone's right to hear those views. "Unity" cannot mean uniformity. It should mean common struggle for a common cause, and this cause must be determined democratically by the membership.

Conventions

Since we can't possibly be delegates (see below) we've attended NYSUT and AFT conventions as observers and worked with other elected delegates from outside New York City. We have seen how the Unity Caucus tightly controls the U.F.T. on all levels. Now a look at how, under the guise of democracy, elections, open balloting, etc., Shanker & Co. have extended their control beyond the U.F.T. to the statewide and nationwide level.

Proportional Representation vs. Unity Caucus Take All

Shanker is well aware of the threat proportional representation could mean for his tight control over the union. It would certainly weaken the Unity Caucus position at conventions because:

1. It would mean the U.F.T. delegation could no longer vote as a unanimous bloc as they have done on every vote taken at all conventions (Unity Caucus discipline in action). We've seen palm cards given to U.F.T. delegates which say: Proposal 1 support; Proposal 2 oppose; etc. (see below).

[note: copy of actual palm card distributed by Unity Caucus at 1976 NYSUT Convention in NY City.]

Most delegates don't even know what they are voting on. Many don't even stay in the assembly for discussion and just come in during voting time. Since the U.F.T. has such a large number of delegates, proportional representation would break into this huge monolithic voting bloc. About 1/3 of the delegates to NYSUT are from New York City, and because of slate voting and "winner-take-all" they are all members of Unity Caucus. Shanker has used this large disciplined bloc to control the state conventions—and then in turn uses NYSUT to control the AFT. (It should be added that besides favors for his Unity Caucus faithfuls back home on a day-to-day basis, the paid vacations to Hawaii, Miami, etc., are good incentives when Shanker strives for "unity" among his loyal supporters.)

2. It would show that in Shanker's backyard there is opposition to the Unity Caucus leadership. Just as he tries to conceal and eliminate serious opposition on a local level, Shanker is very concerned that delegates outside of New York City shouldn't be aware that there are opposition forces within the U.F.T. and that his united Unity Caucus delegation does not represent the rank & file members in a fair way. Delegates from outside New York City show great interest in literature put out by dissident forces within the U.F.T. Many have told us how surprised they were that union members were organizing against the Shanker leadership because they never had heard about it (certainly not in the NYSUT or AFT papers.)

How does Shanker justify that there's no proportional representation when this means that no matter how large a minority vote (even up to 49%) the minority could still not have even one delegate to the convention? What this means is that under the present system the only way any opposition candidate can go to the convention is by overthrowing the whole Unity Caucus leadership.

We'd like to point out that the dissident vote in New York City represents more people than most of the upstate union locals.

We feel that in order to make our Representative Assemblies more truly representative (particularly with respect to the New York City delegation) we should have proportional representation, where representation reflects the proportion of votes that slates or individuals receive.

We also feel that in New York City, where we have about 60,000 union members and about 600 delegates, the election for delegates should be on a district-wide basis, where each district elects a certain number of delegates,

the high schools elect a certain number and each of the functional chapters (secretaries, paraprofessionals, guidance counselors, special ed staff, etc.) elect a certain number. Only through this method can school workers begin to be fairly represented at the state and national conventions.

The present at-large procedures, where we vote for slates of over 600 delegates who we know nothing about, cannot be considered democratic. Why bother to print up all those lists and send them out to every union member? It would be more honest to vote for one delegate and give that person 600 votes. Why pretend we have anything else?

Secret vs. Open Balloting

The question of which is more democratic--open or closed balloting—cannot be discussed on an abstract level, since both can have the potential of being used in a democratic or undemocratic manner, depending on the circumstances.

Under the guise that it's more democratic, Shanker promotes the open ballot as a means for maintaining his power. Any delegates, particularly in small locals outside of New York City who vote against the U.F.T. positions at conventions, are thus identified through the open ballot and are not given the favors that Shanker, as president of the AFT and vice-president of NYSUT, is in the position of giving.

Since Shanker uses open balloting for these ends, we've come to the conclusion that only when there's proportional representation and when the delegates are held accountable to their constituency (the rank & file membership) and not the Unity Caucus U.F.T. leadership, can we support open balloting as a more democratic process. Once again Shanker preaches democracy but practices just the opposite.

Buying Votes

There are many other features of conventions that are designed to curtail democratic participation. Just to mention a few that our limited experience has brought to light:

The conventions are very costly. Many locals in the smaller and poorer communities of the state and the country often cannot afford to send any delegations to the national conventions. This leads to over-representation of the more wealthy and powerful locals and under-representation or no representation of the smaller, poorer locals.

Within the larger locals, these extravagant conventions become one more way for the leadership to buy votes and support. At the recent AFT convention in Hawaii it was clear that much of Shanker's unity was bought in exchange for an all-expense paid vacation halfway around the world. (The U.F.T. leadership admits to spending over \$600,000 just to "send" people to last year's NYSUT and AFT conventions, even with the NYSUT convention held in New York City.)

Summary

From examining the union machinery on all levels and the way it usually functions, we have seen the following general patterns:

1. The least number of people make the decisions.
2. The rank & file are deliberately kept unaware of just what is going on in regards to most issues. When informed by the leadership it is usually in the form of propaganda (getting the line) after choices have already been made by the Unity Caucus leadership on behalf of the membership.
3. There is a conscious attempt by the leadership to limit rank & file participation in meetings, discussion and the decision-making process. Union structures are set up to enforce this policy.
4. There is a consistent effort by union officers on all levels to stifle dissent and opposition. They go so far as to modify or violate previously existing democratic practices and procedures in order to do this.

Our union leadership controls the union in this way so that they can move the union in the direction that they map out, with the last amount of criticism or interference from the membership. What is important for us to realize is that their main aim in controlling the union is for *political, not personal* power, although the latter may enter the picture in the cases of some individuals.

Therefore, we must now look into the question of what our union leadership stands for, and in what direction they are attempting to lead us.

The Politics of Our Union

Until this school year, most teachers felt that they had a powerful fighting union that would promote our interests as workers and educators. For many years after 1960 working conditions were improving, wages were going up, benefits were increasing, job security was taken for granted, and education was undergoing reform. President Shanker always tried to promote the idea that these things had been won by him through his policies. It's our contention that although many of our gains were won through the past militancy of our union, the main reason for these improvements was that there was a great deal of federal, state and local money made available. Beefing up the educational systems throughout the country was a priority of the government for a variety of reasons, among them the demand for science education by the military, the uprisings in the ghettos of many cities, the teacher shortage, and the growth of the education industry—SRA, Distar, teaching machines, etc.

What wasn't noticed by most school workers was that around 1970 funds for education began to dry up, and little by little things began to get worse. Around 10,000 teaching positions were cut from the New York City school system between 1971 and February 1975, fewer supplies and books were ordered, construction of schools slowed down, class sizes (which, in many schools had been below contractual limits) began to increase, programs became "too costly" and disappeared, and at the same time various pseudo-accountability schemes were instituted to demand more "productivity" from staff.

While these cuts were taking place, the union leadership kept trying to convince us that there was no problem—it was just a question of losing school population. But some teachers constantly raised the cry: "Things are getting worse; all our city services are threatened; and someday soon there will be a disaster."

Now the disaster is upon us and our union leadership can offer us only the excuses: "We didn't know this would happen." "We make mistakes; we're only human." "Only political action (COPE) will solve our problems."

Shanker often raises the question "Who are your enemies—do you think that your union or union leaders are on the other side?" and he answers, "Your leaders are not the enemy. We have to stick together to fight our real enemies." But he is careful to confuse us about who they are.

Of course our union is not the enemy—after all the union is the rank and file, not the leadership. We are convinced, however, that our union leaders are not just a bunch of bungling fools (who didn't know that the city and school system were in deep trouble) or well-meaning but helpless leaders (no matter what we do, we'll lose). Criticizing our union leadership does not make us anti-union. In fact we will attempt to show that our leaders are acting against the interests of the majority of UFT members and in the service of our real enemies. Among our union leaders are some hard-working, dedicated individuals (Shanker is one) who do know what's going on, but who are deliberately misdirecting, confusing and betraying the membership.

In this country, most unions are controlled from the top by leaders whose main job is to keep labor peace, prevent strikes and militant actions, promote disunity among different workers, and steer the membership away from threatening corporate profits and corporate control over the government and our lives. The toleration and in many cases the promotion of racism and sexism within our various workplaces and within almost every union is one way union leaders keep workers divided from one another and unable to build a united movement.

It is Albert Shanker's job to control **his** section of the labor force—teachers and other school workers. Below are some of the different ways in which he has led us to inaction, confusion, disorganization, and continues to lead us away from struggling on behalf of the true interests of teachers, children and workers of this city.

What does Shanker have to gain by demoralizing us and selling us out? Isn't it in his interest to get more for his membership? Don't layoffs weaken the UFT by cutting membership and dues, and doesn't this weaken Shanker?

The answers to these questions go way beyond the scope of this pamphlet and involve a thorough analysis of Shanker's political philosophy of "social democracy". Briefly, throughout the past 50 years, most of the union leaders within this country (and throughout much of the world) have belonged to various social-democratic organizations. Shanker and others in the Unity Caucus leadership belong to Social Democrats U.S.A. (SDUSA) as do many other top union leaders in this country. The basic policies of this organization are to support (a) An aggressive international policy, including the all-out support of the Vietnam War, support for the fascist coup of the democratically-elected Allende government in Chile, and support of the continued development of super-kill nuclear weapons. (Thus, the recent endorsement by SDUSA of Henry Jackson, once of the chief militarists in Congress.) (b) A protection of corporate profits and the constant call for "reasonable demands" on the part of workers, even when reasonability requires mass unemployment, lowering of our standard of living and elimination of social services. At the core of this is the protection of the few—the most privileged workers in the most privileged jobs. How many times have we heard Shanker, George Meany and other powerful labor leaders declare that strikes are outdated and unproductive? This is the same line that has been put forth throughout history in many different places at many different times by many other labor leaders, who, like our modern, jet-age union leaders, put cooperation with the banking and other business interests before the rights and needs of workers and poor people. (c) A strategy of pitting one group of workers against another, and unions from other unions; a policy of bargaining for the narrowest demands for a small number of workers; and an outright unwillingness to support other workers, other unions and other struggles. (e.g. Union workers within the same schools or work places are in different union locals and when one group of workers goes on strike the others are told "This is not our problem, this is **their** struggle." SDUSA members are in positions of influence in universities, civic groups, political organizations (the Liberal Party) as well as in position of leadership within the labor movement.

Teachers and Other Workers

One of the goals of our union should be the forging of unity among all the workers in New York City. This is one of the lessons we learned from our strike this past September.

During the strike, when more than 95% of the school workers were out and the entire system was shut down, Shanker kept reminding us that we would antagonize the public if we stayed out too long. And every night on TV and every day in the newspapers we were presented with an assortment of anti-strike, anti-teacher ideas. Hundreds of thousands of parents, children, workers and unemployed people were constantly fed: "Here's a school where teachers care—they're bravely keeping the school open", or "The main issues are sabbaticals, prep periods, higher salaries", or "Why shouldn't teachers sacrifice, hasn't everyone else?" There are over 1,000 schools in New York City, yet the media always presented us with the few that stayed open.

Thus, many teachers felt demoralized, despite the success of the strike, despite the real and growing support from thousands of parents, Parent Associations, community groups, other workers, and the solidarity among all school workers, including those like the paraprofessionals, secretaries and guidance counselors for whom Shanker was doing no bargaining whatsoever. We must not forget that many of the city's school boards shut down as a response to parent and civic pressure and in some areas parents became activated for the first time in years in support of school workers and our demands.

Yet many teachers felt all along that we didn't have the full support of the public; that any support was very fragile; and that we would certainly lose it all if we stayed out any longer. Often heard comments were "No one cares if we are out or not," or "We don't have the support of the public."

Who is the public? A great portion of the public are public employees (just as we are) and their families. The vast majority of the public are working people—employed and unemployed, including us and the parents of our school children. What has happened to cause school workers to fear the hostility of other workers and parents? Why were school workers convinced that we were losing when in reality we were winning?

The answer is that many past and present union leadership policies have served to undermine a good relationship with the public. We would like to point out how our union leadership has made a consistent and deliberate effort to alienate the parents and working people of our city.

1. Attacks on other workers and unions

Despite President Shanker's worn out line (lie) that "he's tried but can't get the other unions to sit down with us", we know that every action, every proposal, and every political statement serves to alienate rather than bring us closer to other unions and workers. Among the abundant examples are:

- a. His attempted raid on DC 37's jurisdiction over school aides and lunchroom workers a couple of years ago, and his attempted raid on the CSEA this year.
- b. The UFT's non-support of custodial workers during their strike two years ago—Although the leadership gave verbal support to the strike, we were told to cross picket lines.
- c. His constant attack on other services and other municipal unions. In the past he always bragged about our getting more than them. Now he complains about getting less.
- d. He has refused to offer UFT support for any struggle of any other municipal or private union, whether it's hospital, transit or sanitation workers, including his refusal to participate in joint actions with other public employee groups in their coalition during last summer's crisis.

2. Alienation of Parents and Community

- a. The two-month long strike in 1968, which teachers supported because Shanker told them it was a struggle for due process, but which created deep rifts between teachers and parents. That the main issue then was not the due process over the forced transfer of a handful of teachers, has been proven over and over again by the union's consistent refusal to fight for due process in the many cases of unjust transfers, U-ratings, non-appointment of regular staff, medical hearings and other forms of harassment perpetrated on staff. How can a union justify such a long, divisive job action that was squarely directed against the community—our natural and necessary ally—over the *transfer of a few teachers*, while at the same time doing virtually nothing in the face of 20,000 school workers losing their jobs?
- b. The union's active fight against bilingual education (long before the question of seniority entered into it), which has been a legitimate demand of parents who feel that their non-English-speaking children have been particularly abused by the educational system.
- c. The many school board elections where Shanker has poured hundreds of thousands of dollars into the campaigns of candidates who are hostile to the interest of the parents and community, particularly in the Black and Latino communities. These school board campaigns, especially in Manhattan's District 1, have included slanderous statements on the part of Shanker—branding parents and community organizations as hooligans, gangsters and promoting racial and religious antagonism. Many UFT COPE-supported school board members have also proven to be hostile to the interests of school workers and schools as a whole. They often end up representing only the very narrow interests of special constituency groups—religious, private and political. During contract negotiations, for example, and during the strike, in many districts UFT-COPE-supported school board members did not support teachers' demands. At the same time there were "pro-community" school board members (opposed by the UFT leadership and branded as "anti-teacher") who stood up with us and vigorously supported our fight against layoffs and budget cuts.

d. The union's refusal to wage a campaign against the deterioration of our public schools, which set in long before the present crisis. Whatever happened to the *More Effective Schools*? What has our union done to pressure the Board of Ed to deal with the incredibly high truancy and dropout rate? Why was there no real effort to mobilize the staff and community to fight against the Board's constant cutting of valuable programs over the past several years? In fact, why did the UFT leadership refuse to support the protest led by parents and joined by staff against the budget cuts and layoffs that took place several years ago in District 4 Manhattan, a protest which finally won back funding and services?

3. The Strike and the Settlement

As we subsequently found out in a *New York Times* interview (9/30/75), Shanker was not negotiating at all for smaller class size and no layoffs—the basic demands for which the vast majority of the membership went out on strike, and the two demands that parents and the public in general were most inclined to support.

As the strike progressed, the union leadership did nothing to enlist parent or community support, and did nothing to answer the vicious attacks by the media. This was left entirely up to the rank & file membership, who in many schools made great efforts to leaflet parents, set up joint meetings, begin the organization of alternate schools, plan joint demonstrations, etc.

So while teachers and parents were beginning the process of uniting in a struggle to get what was needed for our educational system, Shanker and the Board had already agreed to accept the meager allotment of school funds and the necessity for severe cutbacks, and were negotiating with one another only on *how* to effect the cuts. The most incredible aspect of the Board-Union agreement was that it was designed to rejuvenate the rifts between parents and teachers and create a dog-eat-dog atmosphere among staff. We believe that these results were not accidental but were deliberately fostered by the union leadership and the Board in order to divide and weaken the growing unity of parents and staff. This unity was a potential threat to the Board-union capitulation to the Emergency Financial Control Board (the banks) and to Shanker's control over the union. We have since then witnessed Shanker's complete cooperation with the Control Board.

Thus, the settlement:

a. The Shortened School Day

A direct attack on parents and children by eliminating 1-1/2 hours of learning time a week. This has resulted in the drastic curtailment of art, music, science and social studies programs in the elementary schools. The shortened school day is a severe loss in the poorer communities of the city where school is practically the only place where children have the opportunity to develop in these areas. The shortened school day also results in a greater burden on teachers to provide a full, well-rounded curriculum in a shorter period of time.

When Shanker presented the shortened day to us, he said it would alleviate the class size problems by eliminating teaching periods (and prep periods) and would prevent layoffs by saving the Board money. In elementary schools, what has happened is: some art, music, gym, science cluster teachers have become classroom teachers, supposedly to make class size smaller (not true in many cases, since thousands of contract violations still exist). This has resulted in more excessing and more layoffs. Schools are organized on the basis of an average of 32 children a class. So instead of reducing class size, the shortened school day was just another trick to eliminate thousands of teaching positions and force teachers to teach more periods a week (two in special service schools).

President Shanker continues to claim that the shortened day is a "favor the Board did for us". When several local school districts tried to maintain the full school week and provide the total number of preparation periods for teachers, the UFT leaders went to court to stop this, claiming that it was necessary to have uniformity throughout the system. But the more important issue to our union leadership was eroding the power of local school boards to make decisions. It seems to us that instead of forcing the school boards to adhere to the shortened day and the concomitant loss of preps, Shanker should have forced the other school boards (the ones with the shortened school

day) to lengthen the school day and bring back the preps. After all, if some districts could afford not to eliminate vital school time and teaching positions, why not the rest?

In September Shanker told us that the shortened day settlement was a good tactic because it would set the parents and communities in motion on behalf of the full day, and their successful fight would restore the full day and the preps. However, it is clear that instead of supporting the parents or community in the struggles that have taken place (recent sit-ins and sleep-ins in District 3 Manhattan), and despite the unity of parents that has evolved, Shanker has been unfriendly toward them.

b. Worsened School Conditions

The continuing of over-sized classes, the elimination of vital services, the extreme lack of resources, the loss of all extra-curricular activities, the frequent excessing and reorganization, and the overall decrease in school personnel have resulted in a marked increase in student alienation, staff demoralization and general chaos in many of our schools. Teachers who have been working for years now find it extremely difficult to teach. Students are deprived of essential books and materials to work with. Guidance assistance is often non-existent. Drop-outs, already at an alarmingly high number, are rapidly increasing, and the little effort that was previously made to keep children attending schools has been abandoned. As early as intermediate school, truant children are assigned to phantom classes (no teacher) and are almost completely forgotten. There are tens of thousands of school-age children who have few academic skills, almost no vocational skills and who do not attend school. Yet this is only the beginning of the disaster, because most of these children were brought up when times were a little better. What will happen to those who are first starting now?

c. The Continued Layoffs

Now numbering over 20,000 teachers, paraprofessionals, secretaries, guidance counselors, school aides and custodial workers. The partial elimination, inconsistent hiring and misuse of substitute teachers (along with their reduced pay and loss of all benefits). All kinds of abuses of our job rights and working conditions (paraprofessionals used as teachers at para pay, subs used as regulars at sub pay). Rather than hire back 2/3 of those laid off (as promised during the settlement), the Board keeps firing more and more workers.

d. The Unfair Seniority Agreements (which Shanker blames on the Delegate Assembly, but which originated with his executive board)

In the first place, the outright termination of all substitute teachers, including thousands of regular substitutes—teachers who taught regular programs but were never appointed by their principals, something the union should have fought vigorously in the past. (Terminated teachers were not even allowed to vote on the contract settlement, one of the many voting procedures designed to insure a “yes” vote.) In the second place, the thousands more who were finally appointed after years of regular sub work, but whose years of service don’t count. This includes many teachers appointed through the National Teachers Exam (NTE). Among these two categories were a substantial number of minority teachers (according to the New York Civil Liberties Union, 2,000 out of 7,600 subs and 40% of NTE teachers). Then there were the hundreds of guidance counselors, social studies teachers and others with the “wrong license”. Part of the seniority system has since been successfully challenged (through a court suit by laid off guidance counselors) and is undergoing change, but in the meantime has served to turn staff against staff and create poor morale, divisiveness, confusion and chaos within many schools.

There are thousands of staff members who don’t know where they stand because the present seniority system is in question. All kinds of abuses have arisen (principals eliminating or maintaining departments based on whom they want to keep on staff, recertification based on whom you know rather than what you know or how long you’ve taught, etc.). As for paraprofessionals—in some districts seniority has been flagrantly disregarded and patronage rules supreme.

e. The Two-for-one Taylor Law Penalties (which Shanker sold to us as preserving jobs—the money the Board “saved” was supposed to be used to rehire laid off staff)

Shanker said: *We have no choice; the law is the law; we must forfeit an extra week's pay.* Why were only some of the Taylor law provisions were enforced, not all? Who decided which ones? Why didn't the union insist that the Board be penalized for not bargaining in good faith (violating a provision of the law)? Why is the Board allowed to close schools down whenever it suits their purpose (shortened school day, closing of schools on Friday, Feb. 13, shutting down of 50 schools in June)? Why does the union refuse to fight to repeal the unjust anti-labor Taylor law? (They continue to support legislators who voted for the law.) Is it because the union leadership wants to be able to use this law for its own ends—to scare teachers away from striking?

The Taylor law should be revealed as an attack on services as well as an attack on unions and workers, for it makes it very difficult for workers to fight to preserve the jobs that provide the needed services.

f. The Green Light for the Board and Government to Eventually Take Away Whatever They Want

Everything that Shanker told us we “won” in the settlement is now or threatens to be lost, plus more...

- * Salaries are now partially frozen by the E.F.C.B.
- * Sabbaticals have been discontinued.
- * Pensions are once again largely contributory and threaten to be wiped out altogether.
- * Prep periods are being eroded through coverages and conferences.
- * Class sizes keep creeping up due to more layoffs and reorganizations.
- * The widespread non-hiring or inadequate hiring of subs and the pressure on staff to come into work no matter what has in many schools manipulated staff to give up sick leave.

Why did teachers vote to accept a settlement that so clearly betrayed their interests, abandoned their laid off colleagues (about one-quarter of our staff), abused the rights of children to an education, and served to further antagonize the parents and workers in the city?

We will never forget the lies (“Two thirds of all laid off teachers will be rehired immediately, and all of us will be back in a short time”); the deliberately confusing and undemocratic voting procedures (as if our union leadership doesn't know how to conduct a legitimate vote); and the one-sided, misleading campaign to frighten teachers into voting “yes” on a contract which has proven to be worthless. Teachers never had the chance to vote on the terms of the settlement. They were told by the leadership that they either vote “yes” or strike.

But this wasn't the only reason that teachers voted to accept whatever the Board offered. The thousands of teachers who voted “yes”, the thousands who didn't vote, and even many who voted “no” were and are defeated and demoralized as a result of the concerted effort by the union leadership to make them feel that there's no way for them to fight back. The politics of defeat dominate our union meetings at all levels and all the propaganda machinery of our union. We would like to examine these politics a little more carefully.

The Politics of Defeat—Confusion and Demoralization

One of the most important tasks within a union is to define and analyze the problems in a clear way, and to mobilize the membership to fight for solutions to these problems. Including in this must be the vital question of who are our friends and who are our enemies. Let's see how our union leadership deals with some of the important questions:

JOB LOSS AND CUTS

Last year: When questioned about the loss of about 10,000 teaching positions, programs, supplies, etc.) Shanker kept repeating: *We haven't really lost anything, just school population.*

Later last year: *We haven't lost much because we've kept quiet; if we make a fuss, they'll take away more.*

During the contract vote: *This is the best we can get.*

One week later: *The new contract is a spectacular victory for teachers.*

Now: *We lost more than everyone. Our only answer is the Stavisky bill.*

THE BANKS

Occasionally: *They want too much. These “outside force”s are controlling the city.*

Most of the time: *They’re on our side. They’re in trouble. Our interests are the same.*

THE POLITICIANS

Last year during elections: *Carey is a true friend of teachers. (How much COPE money helped elect him?)*

Now: *Carey’s gone against us. We’re not wedded to any one political party. Our only hope is to get the politicians to get us more.*

THE BOARD OF ED

Before and during negotiations: The Board is our adversary.

Now: The Board’s on our side; they’re working for us; they’ve given us a lot.

THE CITY’S FINANCIAL CRISIS

During the contract vote: The crisis is only temporary. The layoffs, shortened school day, loss of preps, etc., are temporary. As soon as the crisis eases we’ll get everything back.

Now: We’re losing our tax base in the city. Things will only get worse unless we get the middle class back and stop businesses from leaving (let’s give them more). We’re losing our school population. We might be down to 25,000 teachers in a few years. Those of us who are left have to stick together.

BARGAINING AND STRIKE

September 8, 1975: “We don’t go back ‘til we all go back.” (Pre-strike rally)

September 30, 1975: “Since a strike represents a possibility of life and death for a union, you do not call a strike unless not calling it is also life and death. And I do not consider the questions we had a matter of life and death....There’s no doubt that in the minds of many of the people the issue was bringing back the laid-off teachers....” But this was not on the negotiating table.

Most of the time: Strikes are a thing of the past. They’re counter-productive.

February 1976: Strikes are good psychological releases—like punching someone in the face if you’re angry. But although they might make you feel better in the short run, they will harm you in the long run.

COMPARISON WITH STATE-WIDE TEACHERS

During contract negotiations: Upstate teachers are much better off than we are.

Now: If we compare what we have to upstate teachers we have much more (shorter hours); but we deserve this because we have a harder job.

TO SUM UP:

Things are bad, but they’re not so bad—they might be worse, but they’re going to get better.

So—keep cool, sit back and wait, and write letters to Governor Carey who used to be our friend, isn't now, but may be in the future if we send him a lot of letters.

Shanker is well aware of the anger and resistance of many teachers toward his dishonesty during and after negotiations, his unwillingness to struggle, and his outright betrayal. There's widespread talk of leaving the union and electing new leadership. Many school chapters have passed resolutions on stepping up union militancy, challenging some of Shanker's policies or restructuring the union.

His responses invariably are: (1) Things are so bad that we are forced to accept whatever they give us. (2) Your union leaders are trying their best. We make mistakes—it's only human, but there's not much we can do except elect the right legislators, pass the right bills and wait for the crisis to pass. ("I don't blame you for being angry." "If you have any suggestions let us know.")

Shanker's confusing and contradictory statements have a purpose—to prevent the rank and file from clearly understanding the issues, to prevent us from moving the union in a different direction, and to foster the constant conclusion that **there's nothing we can do.**

What Can We Do?

The most important questions for rank and file union members today are:

What do we fight for? And How do we do it?

We live in the wealthiest country in the world and it is certainly evident that the major problem is not that we don't have enough, but rather that some people have too much, many people have nothing at all, and those in the middle are allowed to get along in times of prosperity and forced to suffer greatly during times of crisis. It is also clear that those who have the least and do the most suffering are generally the minority people—Blacks, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, Asians and the recent immigrants to our country.

Most of the things that we need in order to survive are produced by the giant multi-national corporations—the American-controlled international monopolies. Every time we buy and cook food, drive our cars, turn on our lights, heat our homes, we are providing them with profit.

This profit is made from our work. We, the workers, grow and harvest the food. We work in the mines. We do all the processing. We build and run the machines. We construct the buildings. We make the roads and drive the trucks. We run the stores and market the goods. We help the children to grow up to become more productive workers.

Then, we buy the food, the clothes, the cars, the gasoline, the housing—at prices much higher than the costs to produce and market them. While prices keep going up, our wages don't keep up with the cost of living. This means that profits are constantly increasing.

Yet this profit belongs entirely to the individuals who own the corporations. They may hoard it; they may invest it to make more profit; they may spend it lavishly (\$35,000 a bed, \$10,000 a necklace); they may use it to buy themselves protection (private police, politicians, spies, armies, foreign governments, etc.). In short, they decide how the profits are used, and their decisions are based on what's good for them, not for us, although it appears sometimes that working people are benefiting from their choices. And, during times of crisis it becomes particularly evident that the role of government is not to promote the interests of the working people, but to above-all serve the rich and protect their investments.

We feel that unions, in the struggle on behalf of the rights and needs of workers, must fight for a just distribution of the profits and the wealth. We must see to it that our government taxes and appropriates as much as is needed to provide for basic public services—hospitals, safety, transportation, schools, daycare, welfare, low-cost housing, etc.

The money is there. Profits continue to go up, not down—crisis or no crisis.

We, the UFT, the largest union local in the country, must demand:

1. The cancellation of interest payments to the banks

The billions of dollars that are spent by our government on debt service are pure profit to the banks and corporations. Because of exorbitant interest, the city has paid off the principal on some past debts many times over. We are not talking about small bond holders, but huge corporate giants, whose overall profits are greater now than ever before in history. The New York City banks and corporations that collected more than \$2.1 billion from the city last year (over 1/6 of the city budget) are owned by the same people who own the oil monopolies, the coal and gas companies, the steel monopolies, the auto industry, the major food processing and distributing companies, as well as major share of the world's resources. These banks are not "on our side" as President Shanker continues to maintain, but rather they will do anything in order to make bigger and bigger profits.

2. Increased federal taxes on the profits of the banks and wealthy corporations

No matter where corporations are, they should be taxed. Many of the largest corporations in the U.S. pay little or no taxes on their profits. There are all kinds of loopholes that protect the rich to the tune of tens of billions of dollars a year. There should be a high federal tax on the oil industry, the manufacturing industries, etc., and the revenues must be sent back to every city, town and community to be spent on human services.

3. Within New York City and most of the other wealthy urban centers, there must be a reassessment of the real estate of wealthy corporations and real estate interests, and an end to the subsidy of slumlords and wasteful luxurious income-producing property.

Real estate taxes of the wealthy corporations are notoriously low. Over one-third of Manhattan real estate is tax-exempt, much of this owned by profit-making corporations. The proportion of real estate (the prime source of business tax revenue) to all taxes raised has decreased from 81% in 1925 to 22% in 1974.

There must be an end to the regressive, anti-worker sales tax and city income tax, which is a disproportionate burden on the unemployed and low income working people who make up the vast majority of our city's residents. It is also a burden on the small business and middle class of our city. We do not call for increased taxes on small business or small scale property—private homes. We are talking about the property owned by billionaires and millionaires.

4. An end to the huge military budget

Last year President Shanker, as a member of the Coalition for a Democratic Majority (a group made up mostly of high ranking "middle-of-the-road" Democratic Party politicians and other public leaders) published a statement calling for an increase in the military budget of \$18 billion over what had been proposed. Shanker defends his position by saying (1) he did this as a private citizen, and (2) the military budget is in our interests; it protects our interests abroad.

We feel that President Shanker deliberately excludes discussion of the military and foreign policy from union business because he fears a great deal of dissension on these issues. Most union members were against the war in Vietnam while he supported it, so he manipulated the membership into taking "no position". Union members were sidetracked into endless and meaningless discussions about whether or not the union should be "political", while our union leaders were using their prestige and political power to promote whatever causes they desired: support of the war, the bombing of Cambodia, the election of Nixon for president, a higher military budget, etc.

As for the huge military budget being in our interest, it has become clear by now that the military serves not the people of the U.S. but the interests of the American-owned international monopolies, who stop at nothing to steal the resources and exploit the people of the world. When Shanker talks about "our" interests he is talking about these corporate interests, not the interests of the people. In addition, the military budget involves huge outlays to the defense industry, which continues to make extraordinarily large profits at the expense of our taxes. The non-competitive military industry has enormous influence in government. In addition to direct military spending, most

of the money spent by foreign governments to purchase American-made arms, comes from American “foreign aid”, i.e. our tax money.

With over 100 billion dollars a year used in this wasteful and destructive way, we can never begin to meet the needs of working people in this country.

5. Full unionization of all working people and an end to “Runaway Shops”

The most important reason that industries leave New York City, as well as other big cities, is not because of high taxes, but because of their desire for lower labor costs. Out of the cities they can open up modern plants with the latest cost-saving equipment. But the biggest saving to these employers is in using low-paid, non-union instead of union labor.

The percentage of unionized workers in the U.S. labor force has gone down since 1950 and part of the responsibility for this lies with our labor leaders, including Shanker, who is vice-president of the AFL-CIO. It is significant that the AFL-CIO, through its sponsorship of AIFLD (American Institute for Free Labor Development, an organization that works closely with the C.I.A.) has channeled more money into organizing dual unions (unions set up to rival already existing unions) in Latin America, than in organizing the unorganized here in this country.

Fighting the runaway shop must be a priority of our union and should involve three basic demands: *full unionization of all workers, full taxation of industries wherever they are, and full accountability of industries to their workers and the communities they are situated in.* This means that a company cannot just pick up and leave, when the jobs and livelihoods of thousands of workers and entire communities are involved.

6. An end to the attacks on workers’ jobs, working and living conditions, and standard of living

There must be a price freeze (not a wage freeze) on all monopoly-produced goods and services (telephone, electricity, gas, etc.). There must be full funding for all public services, particularly those that serve working and poor people. There must be full, productive employment for all at liveable wages. There must be decent low rent housing available to all.

In addition, our union must fight to protect the democratic rights of all workers, which include the right to strike, to protest, to exercise freedoms of speech, press, assembly, etc. These rights are frequently curtailed by state laws (Taylor Law), and federal laws (Taft-Hartley law), and now at a time when they are most essential they are facing a further threat through the S.1 Bill before Congress. Why haven’t our union leaders made defeat of the S.1 bill a priority? Why haven’t they mounted a never-ending campaign against all anti-labor, anti-union legislation? Or do our union leaders consider our constitutional rights as well as our jobs and our well-being to be luxuries that must be given up during hard times?

The crisis we are facing will not go away tomorrow, next month, or next year. As long as we are divided and weak, we, the workers and unemployed, will continue to be the victims and the scapegoats, and we will see a never-ending deterioration of our lives and the society we live in.

We think that the vast majority of working people in New York City can unite around these basic demands. Different groups would want to add on demands that relate to their own specific needs, but above all we must keep in mind that whatever we demand and struggle for cannot be at the expense of other working people.

THE COALITION OF NEW YORK CITY SCHOOL WORKERS: Write: N. Scott

Another View in District 14, Brooklyn Bridge in District 16, Speaking Freely in District 13,

Staten Island School Workers, Independent Delegates for a Democratic Union

You have the right to distribute this pamphlet in school letterboxes

In 1974, after a series of challenges by administrators, we won a Step 3 decision reaffirming our Constitutional right to distribute leaflets and newsletters in staff mailboxes (Baizerman vs. the Board of Ed). Despite this decision, staff members continue to be harassed by principals and union leaders, who say they cannot use the mailboxes to distribute literature. If you know of anyone who needs help in this matter, please contact us.