

RALPH K.: One thing that has aggravated things at CW Post since 1991 is the big issue of workload. We've had on our agenda the nine-credit workload: we've been working twelve credits a semester. And that really was the issue of the 1991 strike. And it has appeared over and over again. One of the problems here is that we're rather isolated. Here we are in a three-campus university and it's our issue, but it has not been the issue of the other two campuses.

Q: Why is that, do you think?

RALPH K.:

ANNE B.: We have a provost who has very little say. Most decisions are made by the University Administration.

RALPH K.: I used to meet with him every month, prior to the

challenged. In short, it was a semi-permanent position. Also, the option to do so was given to all new faculty. So, it's rather peculiar for a union to agree to something like that. But, after all the struggle we had gone through over the issue, I felt it was a step forward.

ANNE B.: It was what we called the “faculty research optio

Q: They don't overlap? Have you and the adjuncts' union president tried to have any sort of communication and

Q: So the administration's demand ... as well as the 2%-4%-4% wage increase -- was that all made the week before school started? Or did you have time to think about this health plan change?

RALPH K.: The health thing I think they told us about earlier. But not too much earlier.

Q: Did the union make a counter-offer or just reject any increase?

RALPH K.: We rejected it, and we did also ask for a lot of information, trying to figure out what the alternative plans were and a whole bunch of other things. I should say the thing is even more complex because they had in the previous year essentially taken away from us the indemnity plan that we had had from the very beginning. They did this by the maneuver of changing, two years before, the carrier. And then the carrier said they didn't want to carry it any more and the Post administration s

Q: What are the limits, say, in mathematics?

RALPH K.: It was 33 by that time. It's been moving up due to a great many different reasons, and now, of course, they're saying it can be any amount -- whatever. And we didn't think that was acceptable. So all of a sudden on Saturday, we have a new problem. First of all, we can't even go back to our chairs and tell them they're going to lose all their release time. And of course, the bad salaries are still there, but we maybe had to eat that if we got something else. So all of a sudden we got a nine-credit workload, but with problems that are very difficult, that we can't live with.

Q: But also, at any time did they drop the demand on health insurance?

RALPH K.: No. So that was sitting there too.

Q: Are you thinking that the faculty would have agreed, if you'd got a nine-credit across-the-board load?

RALPH K.:

RALPH K.: We made the argument, but I don't know if we were able to substantiate it. They said they were "looking into it." Another issue had, of course, emerged in the process: now that we'd been out for a week, they were docking our pay for all the time we were out. So there was also a little question as to what we should do about that. Our faculty People was very firm at that moment that we were not going to accept the idea that we're going to be docked for our strike. Our position was that we wanted to make up the work, and be paid for the make-up.



Q: So from the first day of the strike, they let you know that nobody was getting paid for those days.

RALPH K.: Right, and they were using the formula developed in an arbitration. Significant quantities of money were becoming involved at that point. So that was also hovering about.

Q: You went into the second week of the strike. That must have been a real blow. The Brooklyn faculty has settled, and your administration is saying, "What's the matter with you guys? Why don't you sign?"

ANNE B.: We had a mediator after two weeks. Actually we cleaned up almost everything except the docking issue. The docking was a huge issue. We were already talking about \$4,000 a person. And the mediator was not able to convince them to drop the docking.

Q: Was there some sort of communication with the students in the course of this?

RALPH K.: Yes, there was actually. And we even had a big march in which students participated.

Q: And what about other unions -- adjuncts, plant workers or clerical? Are they in unions at Post?

RALPH K.: Yes. But they're all covered by contracts with no-strike clauses in them.

Q: So they all had to go to work as usual?

RALPH K.: Yes.

Q: And the adjuncts were crossing the picket line as well?

RALPH K.: Not all adjuncts did cross, by the way.

the attempt to make it seem that the raise was higher than it was. Another was the repeated claims that large percentages of the faculty were not honoring the strike, while failing to mention that the "faculty" in question were not the full-time faculty but adjuncts who were covered by a different contract. We also pointed out that the Administration had repeatedly refused our proposal to make up the teaching time lost by our strike, choosing to punish the faculty for striking by docking the money rather than giving the students the education that they deserved.

For my part I would add that our faculty does need to have adequate salaries. I would add my own personal view. I think it is good for our students to see the example of their faculty standing up for their rights. It is very much part of their education to see people fighting for a better world to replace the present system of world-wide injustice.

Q: Could you describe the main features of the final contract?

RALPH K.: A 3%-4%-4% in raises, plus 4/10 of a percent in equity pay in the second and third years. Plus an extra insignificant amount – which now turns out to be \$10,000 -- which will go into the equity funds.

Q: So does that mean that the lowest-paid faculty could get in the second year, say, a 4.4% raise: the standard 4% plus this additional 0.4%?

ANNE B.: It's doubtful that anyone will get that much.

RALPH K.: Some people might make 1% out of that, other people 0% -- depending on where they stand in relation to others -- because it goes into an equity formula.

Q: What about workload?

ANNE B.: The workload is nine credits across the board. And release time – We got back all non-academic released time that had been in the previous contract – chair people, the chair of the Faculty Council, etc.

Q: What about the medical plan?

ANNE B.: As of September, we'll start to pay 5% of the premium cost of the plan, for those not choosing an HMO.

Q: Around the country, especially given this new Supreme Court ruling, which seems to open up the possibility for employers of discriminating against retirees with their benefits packages ... there's lots of now charges of pension theft and the like going

ANNE B.:

RALPH K.: Well, I mean the campus has taken a black eye in the press and elsewhere.. I don't think that they could contemplate having another one ... not that we want one either.

ANNE B.: I think next time we're going to see a much bigger turnout of involved faculty.

RALPH K.: That, too, because so many people are now involved in the leadership of the union.

Q: Looking back on this dramatic series of events, what would you say you and your colleagues who went through this strike have concluded about this? That is, first of all, was it worth it? Secondly, how do you think it could have been done more effectively for the union?

RALPH K.: I shouldn't make it sound like too much gloom. We were put through some pretty rough negotiations and we fought some very destructive proposals, and we did make gains. Following the strike there was a tremendous spirit among our faculty in terms of solidarity and so on, so it really should not be cast in any other way.

ANNE B.: We have seen a big increase in union participation.

RALPH K.: Before the strike, when I called a meeting (I remember in the spring), virtually no one came. I said, "Come to this meeting. We need your input on negotiations." Almost nobody came. After the strike, the meetings were full. We've added to our executive board a great many members and they tend to be our new faculty members. We're getting a lot of participation.

Q: What do you attribute that to?

ANNE B.: Actually, we got to know people on the strike. Ou

they are no longer – if they ever were – teachers-in-training. Much of the undergraduate curriculum in public and private research universities is taught by graduate students who, in effect, have joined the swelling ranks of part-timers , most of whom are Ph.D.s. Together, they form an emerging academic proletariat.”

² In *NLRB v. Yeshiva University* (1980), the U.S. Supreme Court, in a 5-4 decision, ruled that private university faculty were “managerial employees,” and thus could be denied collective bargaining rights under the National Labor Relations Act.

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