

Union's International Participation in the Struggle for Freedom

Joel Freedman

Former Officer of Suffolk Community College Faculty Association

At 4 AM on the morning of December 13, 1981, during the first semester of my sixth year on the faculty of Suffolk County Community College (SCCC), my wife, Rita, and I received a phone call from the supporters of Solidarnosc (Solidarity), the free trade union in Poland, led by an electrician named Lech Walesa. They explained that the communist government had arrested several thousand members of the union and asked for our help. We said that they could use part of Rita's office in New York City.

That morning, when we arrived at the office, there were dozens of Solidarnosc members already working there, seven of whom were included in the original list of those the regime claimed to have arrested. The national news media arrived soon after. In a short time, the Polish unionists established a system to smuggle into Poland the weapons of their revolution: the means of communication with the people of their country (printing presses, mimeograph machines, and radio equipment). The national AFL-CIO provided a telex machine for our office. Ultimately, most of those in our office that morning who had been targeted for arrest returned to Poland, to work for trade union rights and democracy.

One of those, Jerzy Malewski, stayed to represent Solidarnosc in Western countries and international forums, particularly the International Labor Organization (ILO), the oldest agency of the United Nations. After I left SCCC, to work for an international trade union, Solidarnosc defeated the communist General Jaruzelski in a democratic election and Walesa replaced him as the leader of their country. He appointed Malewski as the Polish National Security Advisor. Prior to the election I visited Walesa in Gdansk, at Solidarnosc headquarters with the President of the International Union of Bricklayers, Jack Joyce. We brought Madelaine Albright, who soon afterward would become U.S.



Secretary of State, with us to meet Walesa.

After the communists were gone, I travelled to Poland with Joyce and Landon Butler, who had held the labor portfolio in the Carter White House. With Landon's help we were able to speak to a group of western corporations now interested in investing in

Poland. I reminded them that the overthrow of communism had been led by a union inspired by female shipyard worker, Anna Walentynowicz, who was fired for union activity.

Thus, the first demand of the strikers had been recognition of their free and independent union consistent with international labor standards for Freedom of Association embodied in Convention 87 of the ILO, a tripartite organization including delegations of workers, employers, and governments. Therefore, companies should honor all ILO labor standards if they wanted to invest in Poland.

After consulting Solidarnosc, we created Poland Partners to invest \$70 million of union pension funds in the country. I also brought Walter Kardy, a Polish American, who represented the masonry employers in the US, to help me teach Solidarnosc union leaders, recently released from prison, about collective bargaining, and to initiate a housing project there. The building trades unions in the U.S. created a training program to teach Polish construction workers newer methods of building.

While at SCCC I was an officer of the Faculty Association. When I attended NYSUT and AFT Conventions as a delegate of our local, I sold Solidarnosc tee shirts to raise money for their cause. But it is striking that few I



Lech Walesa reacts to cheers by his fellow workers as he leaves the Lenin Shipyards in Gdansk on 17 June, 1983.

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worked with had any idea what I was doing.

Much of what I did in Poland, and around the world, derived from what I learned from Bayard Rustin when I travelled with him from New York to a Leaders Meeting at which former German Chancellor, and Nobel Prize winner, Willy Brandt, who I had written about in elementary school, presided. Bayard had organized the 1963 March on Washington and had played a leading role in the civil rights movement since the early 1940's. In 1947 he led an early "freedom ride," as a result of which he was sentenced to serve time on a North Carolina chain gang. His description of that imprisonment led to the elimination of chain gangs.

The Leaders meeting we attended included world leaders from the Labor and Social Democratic parties such as, the British Labour Party, the Israeli Labor Party, the German and Swedish Social Democrats, and similar parties from Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Once we were around the meeting table in Brussels, Belgium, Bayard recognized my hesitancy to speak up. He told me he was "going to be naughty" and proceeded to say what needed to be said. After that lesson, for more than a quarter century of such meetings, I never was hesitant to say or do what was necessary, even when the risks were substantial. Bayard preceded me into Pinochet's Chile and pre-Mandela South Africa, as well as Poland. His experiences made it easier for me to handle all I encountered in those and other countries.

When the communist control of Eastern Europe finally ended, my wife, Rita, received recognition from Tom Kahn, who had worked with Bayard to pull together the 1963 March and ran the AFL-CIO's effort to support Solidarnosc. Rita received a piece of barbed wire from the actual "iron curtain", encased in glass, with the inscription: "To a champion of lost causes, this symbol of a lost cause triumphant!"

She later worked at the AFT for Al Shanker, Sandy Feldman, Ed McElroy and Randi Weingarten.



Joel Freedman in 1981 with two of his children in a picket line supporting the Polish union. The woman over Joel's shoulder is Irena Lasota, from the Committee in Support of Solidarnosc, one of the two people who called the Freedmans, December 13th, 1981.



YOUR HEALTH CONNECTION

By Frances S. Hilliard, RN, MS
 Professor of Nursing (Emeritus), Nassau Community College

Osteoporosis means “porous bone,” and occurs when more bone is broken down than can be replenished by the body’s formation of new bone. As a result, bones can become brittle, break more easily, and take longer to heal. As many as half of postmenopausal women and one in five older men are at risk for fractures related to osteoporosis.

The current screening test used to detect osteoporosis is known as DXA – dual-energy x-

ray absorptiometry. It measures the amount of calcium and other minerals in your bones and calculates relative bone density. This test can identify a decrease in bone density *before* you experience a fracture. It also can confirm an actual diagnosis of osteoporosis, and is used to monitor response to treatment.

The scan is simple, painless, and quickly completed. Medicare Part B covers a screening bone density exam every 24 months, and as part of Medicare’s Preventive Care, this screening is not subject to deductibles and copays. (Once you have been diagnosed with osteoporosis, this does not apply.) The test may be permitted more frequently should you have certain risk factors.



NYSUT RC 39 Revenue and Expenses Budget 2019-2020 Fiscal Year

Revenue Accounts	Adopted Budget
Voluntary Participation Fees	\$ 2500.00
Total Revenue	\$ 2500.00
Expense Accounts	
Supplies	\$ 5.00
Postage	\$ 50.00
Charitable Contributions	\$ 800.00
Travel for Officers/ Conference Expenses	\$ 445.00
Delegate Expenses (RA and AFT Conferences)	\$ 1200.00
Total Expenses	\$ 2500.00
Projected increases (decreases) in Net Assets	\$ (0.00)

This budget was adopted by a board resolution.

NYSUT Retiree Council 39 FINANCIAL STATEMENT FOR THE TWELVE MONTHS ENDING JUNE 30, 2019

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION			
Checking Account			\$20,656.49
TOTAL CASH ASSETS			20,656.49
NET ASSETS			\$20,656.49
STATEMENT OF REVENUE AND EXPENSES			
REVENUE ACCOUNTS	ADOPTED BUDGET	ACTUAL TO-DATE	BUDGET REMAINING
Voluntary Participation Fees	\$2,200.00	\$2,531.00	\$ 331.00
Ads for Newsletters	920.00	0.00	(920.00)
TOTAL REVENUE	\$3,120.00	\$2,531.00	\$ (589.00)
EXPENSE ACCOUNT			
Supplies	\$ 5.00	\$ 0.00	\$ 5.00
Postage	170.00	35.95	134.05
Travel for Officers/ Conference Expenses	545.00	609.73	(64.73)
Delegate Expenses (NYSUT RA)	1,350.00	1,219.54	130.46
Charitable Contributions	1,000.00	800.00	200.00
Dues	50.00	0.00	50.00
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$3,120.00	\$ 2,665.22	\$ 454.78
INCREASE (DECREASE) IN NET ASSETS	\$ 0.00	\$ (134.22)	\$ (134.22)

Retiree Council 39 Board of Directors

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Send your comments, suggestions, and inquiries to NYSUT RC39 Officers, 98 Rocky Point Landing Rd., Rocky Point, NY 11778 or rc39pete@optonline.net.

RC39 Website

Go to the RC39 website, <http://rc39.ny.aft.org/>, where you can read recent NYSUT RC39 newsletters in color, AFT and NYSUT news releases, and much more.

RC39 Newsletter is looking for comments, suggestions and articles from its members.



Send your comments, suggestions, or article to Peter Herron at rc39pete@optonline.net or mail to 98 Rocky Point Landing Road, Rocky Point, NY 11778. Your article will be published when space is available. RC39, NYSUT, and AFT news will be given priority.



Do not let a new address keep you from receiving NYSUT RC39 newsletters. There are three ways to update your address. Contact NYSUT Member Records at 1-800-342-9810 ext. 6224. Send written changes to: NYSUT Member Records, 800 Troy-Schenectady Road, Latham, NY 12110, or e-mail changes to memberec@nysutmail.org. If you are a snowbird, give Member Records a few weeks notice to change its address records each way.

Have you paid your voluntary RC39 contribution for 2020?

If you have not sent in your voluntary NYSUT RC39 annual contribution, now is as good a time as ever. Just send your check along with the form below to the RC39 treasurer. It is your contributions that enable RC39 officers and delegates to represent you at NYSUT conferences and meetings.

Retiree Council 39 Voluntary 2020 Participation Fee Form

Name _____ e-mail _____

Address _____ Phone (____) _____

City _____ State _____ Zip code _____

College retired from _____ Year of Retirement _____

Please check amount of your voluntary participation fee: \$25 _____ Other \$ _____

Send your check, made out to NYSUT RC39, along with this completed form to:

Ms. Joan Prymas, RC39 Treasurer, 141 Montgomery Street, Ilion, NY 13357