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The ILR School at Fifty: Voices of the Faculty,  
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## 7. The 1970s

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## 7. The 1970s

### Abstract

From View from the Dean's Office by Robert McKersie. "I had been on the job just a week when Keith Kennedy, vice provost, called and said we needed to make a trip to Albany to meet the chancellor of SUNY, Ernest Boyer. This was late August 1971. After a few pleasantries, it became clear that this was not just the courtesy call of a new dean reporting in to the top leader of the state university. Chancellor Boyer went right to the point: a new Labor College was going to open on the premises of Local 3 IBEW's training facility on Lexington Avenue in Manhattan, and the ILR School had to be there as a partner. It was not clear what unit of SUNY would take over the Labor College, but it was clear that given its broad mandate for labor education, the ILR School was going to play a key role." Includes: View from the Dean's Office; From Eric Himself; Another Perspective; Labor College Graduation: VanArsdale's Dream Fulfilled; The View of a Visiting Faculty Member; Another Perspective; and The Student's View.

### Keywords

Cornell, dean, school, labor, law, work, relation, industrial, faculty, student, ILR, program, graduate, college

### Comments

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7.

## THE 1970S

### View from the Dean's Office

*by Robert McKersie*

I had been on the job just a week when Keith Kennedy, vice provost, called and said we needed to make a trip to Albany to meet the chancellor of SUNY, Ernest Boyer. This was late August 1971. After a few pleasantries, it became clear that this was not just the courtesy call of a new dean reporting in to the top leader of the state university. Chancellor Boyer went right to the point: a new Labor College was going to open on the premises of Local 3 IBEW's training facility on Lexington Avenue in Manhattan, and the ILR School had to be there as a partner. It was not clear what unit of SUNY would take over the Labor College, but it was clear that given its broad mandate for labor education, the ILR School was going to play a key role.

The launching of the Labor College represented the fulfillment of a dream of a group of students who had completed the labor liberal arts program within the extension division and had, of course, benefited from the leadership of Harry VanArsdale. The hope of this group had been that ILR would operate the Labor College as some type of subsidiary in New York City. But the faculty, aware of the difficulty of setting up a full undergraduate program in New York City, opted for a certificate program focused on industrial relations courses that could serve as an important building block in an undergraduate program that would be the core of the Labor College. So I was on hand for the ribbon-cutting ceremony in early September 1971, as were Governor Nelson Rockefeller and a wide range of dignitaries.

Empire State College, the unit of SUNY that was the "Campus Without Walls," took over the governance of the Labor College. To ensure that we were well represented and pursuing our franchise, key faculty members, such as Leo Gruenfeld and Alice Cook, stepped in to chair the credit-and-certificate program offered under the auspices of the Labor College. I agreed to teach a course in collective bargaining the first semester and commuted every week to New York City.

Aside from giving me an opportunity to get to know the Metropolitan District of the Extension Division (the largest office), this experience provided me

first-hand exposure to the labor leaders who wanted formal education to augment their innate intelligence and real-world experience. Teaching adults with substantial background and in a formal course is a special adventure. (Professional schools offer many courses for credit to students with little experience and many courses to adults where the setting is general adult education and not part of a degree program.) These students wrote papers about their unions and their involvement in collective bargaining, and I found the experience incredibly rewarding and educational.

While the Labor College represented a very dramatic development, it was part of a much larger movement that was gaining momentum in the early 1970s. The extension division of the school was growing, and the demand for adult education courses—especially those taken for credit—was expanding dramatically. Most of the credit courses were at the undergraduate level. In Rochester, however, the school instituted several graduate courses under the leadership of Jean McKelvey and Alice Grant. Several faculty commuted weekly to Rochester (courtesy of Greyhound Bus) to offer these courses.

Within a few years of the launching of the Labor College the same students who had successfully pressed for the creation of an undergraduate degree program shifted their attention to the need for a graduate degree program in New York City. In retrospect, it should have appeared inevitable that those who would receive certificates in the labor liberal arts program and then move on to the bachelor of science program in the Labor College would be looking for a graduate degree in industrial and labor relations.

This topic became a major challenge during the mid-1970s and involved many meetings with the students, led by Bernie Rosenberg (a business agent of Local 3), sessions with the Advisory Council of the school, and extensive discussions with the Planning Committee and with the total faculty of the school. A couple of vignettes come to mind.

Given the major departure that a graduate program offered in New York City by an ILR school would mean for the faculty, I asked the Planning Committee if they would be willing to meet on a Saturday to consider this topic and other longer-run issues. I received from one member of the committee a cryptic response: "Saturdays are my time—sorry."

Another cameo that is etched in my mind occurred over dinner at the Statler Club when Eric Jensen, chair of the Advisory Council, came on strong and told the faculty group assembled that if they did not step up to a graduate degree program in New York City, they would stand to lose substantial financial support in Albany. The faculty felt they had been tackled by "Big Red," a former Cornell football player.

As it turned out, we designed with Baruch College a jointly sponsored graduate degree program that would draw on the strengths of both institutions. As I had done with the Labor College, I taught in one of the early sessions of the new program, this time while I was on leave from

ILR at M.I.T. during the spring of 1980. Again, the opportunity to work with experienced adults, this time at the graduate level, was a pleasure and worth the commute every week from Boston.

**From Eric Himself...**

I enjoyed being head of the school council. The council sought to enhance the reputation of the school and there were a number of top union and management officials participating. During the 1970s we established a master's degree program with Baruch College in New York City, although not without some difficulty from the faculty. The ILR Associates Program was established and a number of leading companies joined and provided funds and access to the school. We established the Judge Groat Award, perhaps one of the significant annual events of the school. Of course we can no longer listen to the judge talk at that event and in truth, I miss his presentations even though they were sometimes long and rambling.

*by Eric Jensen ('51)*

Eric Jensen's reference to the "bread and butter" reality of meeting the educational needs of the citizens of the state on multi-location bases was not stretching a point. Indeed, in 1972 (my second year as dean) the school received a recommendation from the state budget office to slash funds by almost 10 percent. It is not clear why the ILR School had been singled out, because at that point the fiscal crisis had not yet descended upon the state. Perhaps it was fallout from what some people perceived as the school's slow and only partial response to the petition to open a branch of the school in New York City. We did not spend much time debating the motivation, however, but went to work immediately mobilizing the friends of the school, especially within the labor movement, to walk the halls of the capitol and insist that the money be restored. I can remember vividly some sessions during which outspoken representatives from the labor movement upbraided budget examiners in my presence for their recommendation to cut our budget. Within Cornell, however, I was chastised for unleashing the labor movement, and budget types predicted that we would suffer the consequences in the long run. To the best of my knowledge, we never did get punished for mobilizing our allies.

The budget cuts of the mid-1970s were more serious. They applied to all the units of SUNY and reflected a severe financial crisis facing the state. Rather than applying the cuts uniformly across the school, I reasoned that it was better to target the cuts, have some selective layoffs, and then return to as much normalcy as possible. Several of the people who were let go for "lack of funds" were restored on the recommendation of an arbitrator who felt that their contracts had been breached. Nevertheless, we did what today would be called restructuring and got through the budget crisis reasonably well.

Fighting the budget battles in Albany also had its lighter moments. At a holiday party in 1976, a question was raised of whether the dean could truly ever be a Santa Claus again, and the following poem was dispatched to Jim Huttar, one of the most effective emissaries for the school in Albany:

I have just passed Varna and am still heading East  
 Without benefit of sleigh, skis or helpful beast  
 The wise men look to the stars for inspiration  
 I am still bent over without consolation  
 Some birds just passed over with the report  
 That they had been to ILR for a short snort  
 Seems there were plenty of crumbs and mice  
 At a holiday party spiked with a salad a la Trice  
 They also reported a strange event, indeed!  
 Your reading a poem about my many misdeeds  
 I am not sure which gives me greater pain,  
 My backache or the severe migraine  
 At hearing you spoof this noble pilgrimage  
 Your comments about this Albany mission are pure sacrilege  
 'Tis the Holiday season and I cannot tarry  
 The School needs the money, especially Harry  
 I promise to bring it all back, in a bundle marked: "Cash and  
 CAREY"

—Santa Claus

No sooner had the poem appeared in the weekly *ILR News* than the following note appeared: "Bob—Since I'm the only 'Harry' in the ILR School, I expect some special attention in the next budget. (signed) Harry Trice."

For most of the budget proceedings, the ILR School appeared in concert with the three other statutory colleges. I found these sessions quite educational and another quatrain somehow emerged:

When I was small and in my youth  
 I thought of farms and barns as quite uncouth.  
 Now I hear at the budget sessions this year  
 That they are top priority of all budgeteers.  
 There was a day when new programs were our aim,  
 Now it's "fix the roof so we can come in out of the rain."

Beyond developments in New York City and Albany, important things were happening across the state; indeed, the motto that the "state is our campus" was becoming more than a vision. Another manifestation occurred in Jamestown, New York. Bill Whyte, who played a key role in the relationship between the school and that important development, lays out the story line.

### Another Perspective

*by William F. Whyte*  
(1994: 281-82).

Upon my return from a six-month trip out of the U.S., I consulted with colleagues about possible developments to study. Through them, I learned about the Jamestown Area Labor-Management Committee (JALMC), a program that linked leaders of organized labor and management in an effort to save jobs through cooperative activities and through employee buyouts of plants facing shutdowns. Earlier community labor-management committees had limited their functions to mediation. JALMC left this to the New York State and federal mediation services in order to concentrate on community economic development. This sounded novel and interesting.

A new trend was emerging in management strategies. Earlier, the fad had been diversification. Corporations had become conglomerates as top management bought up locally owned plants outside their main lines of business. Now the fashion was for top management to strive to achieve leaner organizations by dumping plants that were unprofitable or only marginally profitable. This created a scramble as local citizens sought to save jobs through employee buyouts or by making local investments and establishing local management.

Dean McKersie encouraged me to organize what we were calling the New Systems of Work and Participation Program (NSWPP). We would do case studies of labor-management cooperative activities in Jamestown and several of the employee buyouts....

[An] NIMH grant attracted into the project three colleagues from ILR's Department of Organizational Behavior. Tove Hammer and Robert Stern got involved in the study of employee buyout cases, and Howard Aldrich joined Stern in a historical study of worker cooperatives from 1840 to 1940....

Chris Meek and I studied the Jamestown Area Labor-Management Committee. The Jamestown venture introduced me to one of the more memorable figures in my experience, Congressman Stanley N. Lundine. The first Democrat in forty years to be elected mayor of Jamestown, Lundine had begun by trying to revive his depressed manufacturing city by persuading big companies to move into abandoned industrial buildings. Frustrated by Jamestown's reputation as having a "poor labor climate," he had shifted his strategy to the development of local resources. Through his family, Lundine had ties with leading local figures in management and unions. After meeting separately with some of these people, he called them together to create the Jamestown Area Labor-Management Committee.

You may wonder what was happening back at Cornell while all of these pressures were developing in the environment facing the school. The challenges on the inside were just as formidable. I can remember when I was a candidate for the

deanship during the spring of 1971, many people mentioned that the big issue I would confront would be the need to plan for a new generation of faculty at the school. The founding faculty, as they were called, as well as a group of other distinguished faculty who had joined during the first decade or two, were all in their sixties and approaching what might be thought of as normal retirement age. Would these people be asked to retire? And how would the school go about replacing the likes of McKelvey, Neufeld, Konvitz, Jensen, Cook, Brooks, Whyte, Hildebrand, Galenson, Clark, MacIntyre, and Slavick? (I am sure I have left a name or two out and offer my apologies in advance.)

One solution was to encourage individuals to retire and be rehired on a half-time basis on college funds, thereby freeing up the state funds so we could proceed to bring a new cadre of junior faculty on board. There was considerable unease over the policy and one of the just-mentioned faculty sent along the well-known cartoon featuring Methusaleh, the point being well made: Chronological age is no measure of anything. Yet, we needed to find a way to bring a new generation of faculty into the system.

Anyway, a large number of junior faculty were recruited during the early 1970s, many of whom now provide key leadership for the school: Lee Dyer, Clete Daniel, Tove Hammer, Sam Bacharach, Robert Hutchens, Bob Stern, and Paul Velleman, for example. As a faculty, we wrestled with some tough decisions while this large number of junior faculty came forward for tenure consideration during the late 1970s. The process of selecting which colleagues were to be given tenure was not easy, but the school got through it, illustrating again the ability of the ILR School to govern itself effectively.

The regeneration process that took place in the Department of Labor Economics required special planning. Having come from the University of Chicago, with its great emphasis on neoclassical analysis, I thought that in the recruitment of new leadership in labor economics, we needed to balance institutional with more quantitative forms of analysis. The question was how to bring this blending about. We decided to hold a retreat and to invite a couple of the stars of the new breed of labor economists to help us develop a plan. This retreat set the stage for the recruitment of Ron Ehrenberg, but because Ron was already tenured at the University of Massachusetts, most people thought he was unmoveable. One of the stratagems that helped convince him to come to ILR was a visit I made to his home in Amherst, Massachusetts, to talk about the opportunities for his leadership at the ILR School. I told him that I just happened to be in the area, and he was duly impressed at my effort to meet him on his own home ground. Only later did I confess that my in-laws lived only five miles away, in South Hadley, Massachusetts, and that I was in the area for other reasons.

Anyway, under Ron's leadership, the department has become one of the best groupings of labor economists in the United States. There are other stories to tell about Ron and the research work of the Labor Economics Department. Here are the highlights of one of these dramas.



As part of a research project, Ron and several of his students looked at pay rates for telephone workers and concluded that they were higher than they would have been in the absence of collective bargaining. (This was not a surprising result given other research that shows that unions do indeed raise wages. In fact, that is what they are supposed to do.) However, the report set in motion a tremendous uproar about research work, involving leaders from the Communications Workers Union and the state AFL/CIO, with claims that Fred Kahn, then Chairman of the Utilities Commission that had sponsored the research, had been kicked upstairs to the CAB because of the whole episode. The issue that raised hackles, of course, was the possibility that because unionized telephone workers were paid more than would be true in an open market, these "extra costs" should not be passed on to the consumer but should be accepted as lower profits by the stockholders of the telephone company.

Thinking back over the decade of the 1970s would not be complete without mention of some of the terrific talent that has come through the ILR School since its inception, embodied in the impressive alumni and exciting students I got to know. The Groat Alumni Award was inaugurated the first fall I was at the school, thanks to the genius of Bob Risley. I had the pleasure of presenting this recognition to Jack Sheinkman, now president of the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers, and Eric Jensen, then vice president of industrial relations for ACF

Industries and now a consultant and arbitrator. The alumni who have received the Groat Award in succeeding years are just the most visible manifestation of the incredible talent that has passed through this institution. In fact, many of them have contributed reflections to this volume.

The students, especially the undergraduates, were on the edge of every important issue. More power to them! They participated in good measure in the human affairs program that had been largely inspired by Bill Whyte; they pressed the administration not to buy products from J. P. Stevens; they formed an organization called Committee on Labor Action (COLA) that brought labor leaders to the campus and was ultimately the nucleus for organizing the Cornell food service workers into a local of the UAW; and, finally, they insisted that the school not hold classes on Labor Day, but commemorate the occasion with speeches, picnics, and a cessation of classes.

### Another Perspective

*by Paul Yager (GR '49)*

I would like to recall a brief exchange between Pete Jensen and George Brooks at a Founders' Seminar held in conjunction with the Groat program. During the discussion period, as I remember it, Jensen emphatically defined collective bargaining as a system in which the adversaries—labor and management—are engaged in a power struggle to overcome each other and achieve their respective goals. Brooks warmly defended collective bargaining as a system in which the adversaries are engaged in solving mutual problems at the workplace and allocating income shares.

Turning to more personal reflections, I remember sitting next to Jimmy Hoffa only two months before he disappeared. Having come to the Cornell campus to speak on the subject of prison reform, he had agreed to spend an additional half-day at the ILR School. Our labor historians, Jim Morris and Clete Daniel, and several other individuals interviewed him and their in-depth interview with this very formidable individual is housed in our remarkable archives.

One other memory deals with a very polarizing event that occurred within my first year at ILR. Prior to coming to Cornell, I had been heavily involved with a variety of programs dealing with race relations, specifically, working with black businessmen on the south side of Chicago and doing research for the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. I had also prepared one of the analytical tools used by the Office of Federal Contract Compliance. So it seemed proper when I met with the alumni chapter of the school in Washington to give a talk on the subject of affirmative action. The talk was well received, and when President Dale Corson saw the text, he asked if it could be reproduced in the monthly *Cornell Chronicle*. That (McKersie 1972) launched the fireworks!

I had made some general comments about attitudes on the Cornell campus with respect to race relations and I was not sufficiently sensitive to the phrasing that would be read very carefully, given the fact that it was barely two years after the tumultuous takeover of Willard Straight in 1969. Anyway, I ended up being cited by the Faculty Council of Representatives for a "breach of decorum" and, as a result, met with the ILR faculty and engaged in some deep soul-searching that I think left all sides with better relations and understanding. As I look back on that episode, I am sure that I should have handled it differently. Nevertheless, it served as a pivotal event and enabled me to engage the faculty in some very serious and productive dialogue.

The decade of the '70s represents for myself and my family a hallmark of our careers (indeed, three of our children are Cornell alumni), and my interest in

### Another Perspective

*by Jack Sheinkman ('49)*

"Well, I was never one of those people who believed that as a result of the J. P. Stevens victory the walls of Jericho would come tumbling down. It did have a positive effect, however. For example, our relations with the company now are good, better than the relationships we have with most textile companies. They resolved all the litigation by paying us \$1.5 million, and they have lived up to their commitment to us—they have not tried to battle us within the union plants. But there was never a commitment to open the doors to us in nonunion plants. What they do there is what historically every employer with both union and nonunion plants has done—they provide the same benefits in the nonunion plants as they do in the union plants. Organizing new plants is not easy, particularly in view of the anti-labor climate.

working on this volume represents an effort to return some value for the many contributions this special place has made to our lives.

## **Labor College Graduation: VanArsdale's Dream Fulfilled**

*by Robert McKersie*

The annual graduation ceremony of the Labor College was expected to be different and the event in 1979 fulfilled the prediction. Since the program attracts workers throughout the metropolitan area, it was not surprising that a union hall had been chosen for the occasion: the headquarters of the Hotel, Motel and Club Employees Union located on 44th Street. The organizers promised to start the program on time, 7:00 sharp (in fact, students had been urged to be on hand by 6:00 to work out the kinks in the order of procession). But the featured guest, New York State Assembly Speaker Stanley Fink, had been delayed by a previous engagement, and so the program did not begin until 7:20 p.m.

As we waited for the festivities to start, we began talking to a blonde-haired woman sitting next to us. "What brings you here?" we asked. "My son-in-law is graduating tonight after two years of hard work. I should be so lucky to have a daughter married to this fine man, who has gone to the Labor College--evenings for two years to get this certificate in Labor Liberal Arts."

"Do you have other children?"

"Yes, a son who has dropped out of college and a daughter, who is studying Russian literature. My husband dislikes events like these so he is waiting at the restaurant where we plan to celebrate. If this program does not get over soon after 9:00, we will probably find him under the bar."

The atmosphere inside the hall was both festive and serious. The hundreds of adults and children who filled the side sections of the hall murmured with anticipation, and fancy clothes were very much in evidence. The academic procession was traditional in only one respect: the wearing of academic robes. The candidates, whose average age was 42, represented every nationality and working background imaginable. They marched to their seats to the accompaniment of a folk singer and spirited union ballads.

The first speaker of the evening was the class valedictorian, who held the position of secretary in the Taxi Drivers Union. He spoke about the unfinished agenda for economic justice with the fervor and eloquence that comes from a lifetime (he was close to 50) of hard work and straightforward thinking. He was followed by the student association speaker, who made his mark with a one sentence statement, "Let's keep New York City a union town." Then a representative of the ILR Alumni Association tackled all the big questions of concern to the labor movement: minimum wage, Davis-Bacon, labor law reform,

and inflation. These speakers had been introduced by the booming voice and strong presence of the dean of the Labor College, Richard Dwyer, who, when he was not teaching and administering the Labor College, served as a part-time preacher and worker for one of the pentecostal churches in New Jersey. He announced, "I do not need a microphone," and quickly proceeded to prove his point.

As he introduced the evening's main speaker, some people in the back row quipped, "The speaker of the evening is the Speaker." Fresh from the session just concluded, Stanley Fink spoke of the parts of the legislative program that were of special interest to the labor movement, such as a bill to extend the Agency Shop. At one point during his remarks he read off the names of labor leaders (listed in the back of the program as members of the Labor College Advisory Board) and said, "I have worked with these individuals and I value their advice immensely." The audience sat patiently and listened more closely as he mentioned the possibility of casino gambling and the "throw-away" line that he "would welcome the input of Labor" on this subject.

Next, Harry VanArsdale, president of the New York City Central Labor Council, came to the podium and thanked Stanley Fink for his presentation. VanArsdale drew the attention of the Speaker to the work of the Labor College and said, "We know that the Speaker will support the next step in the building of a full program, a master's degree." No one could doubt the power and uniqueness of Harry VanArsdale. His clear, nasal twang commanded attention. His white hair and direct manner marked him as a person who was accustomed to getting results. And in this setting he could be spotted as the only individual on the stage, other than Stanley Fink, who wore no cap or gown. This was the seventh graduation exercise for the Labor College and Harry VanArsdale had not missed one, nor had he ever worn a cap and gown. As a patron of education, he chose to leave it to the academics to wear the gown and to work "within the cloth."

For some people, education is a passing fancy or a vague objective. For Harry VanArsdale it was a constant passion. He demonstrated his abiding faith in the importance of education in so many ways: the Futurians, a club of college graduates from Local 3 of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, who attend lectures and special programs; Bayberry, a magnificent residential center (the former home of the Davis family), where over 15,000 rank-and-file members have taken a one-week course in critical thinking; the Educational and Cultural Trust Fund that has awarded scholarships to sons and daughters of Local 3 members at the rate of about \$300,000 a year; and the Labor College.

The Labor College stands as the most impressive achievement of this labor leader turned education booster, and everyone acknowledges that without VanArsdale's leadership the Labor College would never have been launched. Dedicated in September 1971, it came to fruition only after VanArsdale and his labor associates pressed for "their college" (after all, management had their business schools). The campaign centered at the doors of the public institutions of the state: SUNY and Cornell University, especially the New York State School of Industrial and Labor Relations.

Between the opening of the Labor College and the ribbon-cutting by Governor Nelson Rockefeller at its first location, a building owned by Local 3 at 25th and Lexington (it subsequently moved to the premises of GHI through the help of Louis Levine, who had served as industrial commissioner to Rockefeller), and the graduation ceremony we were attending in 1979, the Labor College had graduated almost a thousand individuals.

For the 1979 graduation exercise, just over 100 individuals were listed on the program to receive certificates in Labor Studies, certificates in Industrial and Labor Relations, associate's degrees in Arts and Science, and bachelor's degrees in Arts, Professional Studies, and Science. One by one they came to the platform. As each candidate shook hands with the appropriate dignitary, a picture was taken by the staff photographer of the New York City Central Labor Council. Someone had remarked that no one from the press was covering the event, but the organizer had made sure that each graduate would have a personal memento of this important occasion.

At most graduation ceremonies a request is made, "to hold all applause until the final recipient has been announced." At this one, that ground rule got nowhere: spouses, children, and friends demonstrated their enthusiasm as soon as their special person was mentioned. The applause came from all quarters and was directed at older and younger, black and white, men and women, indeed, for everyone in this extraordinarily varied and diversified outcome of this unique educational process. Some students were using education to advance in their job or in the hierarchy of the union, some were using it to improve their minds and their ability to communicate in English (a sprinkling of Spanish names suggested this point), and some welcomed the experience of attending classes in the company of other adults.

As we were getting ready to leave the hall, Harry VanArsdale invited us upstairs to meet some of the people and to enjoy some refreshments. The scene inside the oblong room that normally functions as a classroom or a meeting hall for the local union contrasted with the graduation event just ended downstairs. No caps and gowns were in evidence and most of the people stood near the table that had been turned into a temporary bar.

As they say, there is no "free lunch" and there is also no free drink. Shortly after most of the people had assembled, VanArsdale opened the meeting with an appeal to all those assembled: new students needed to be recruited for the Labor College. "I will ask the business manager (who happened to be Tom VanArsdale, his son, who was also well connected in educational circles since he served as a trustee of the state university) to keep a list by business agent of the individuals who have been recruited to the ranks of the Labor College." Clearly, most of the men in the room were business agents, and while they remained clustered in the rear of the room (as they had clustered toward the back of the auditorium and hallway during the graduation ceremony), they got the message.

To make sure that there was no mistake about the objective of the meeting, VanArsdale proceeded to ask a succession of officials from Local 3 and

the Labor College to talk about the importance of education. The testimonials hit the same themes: The unique role of the Labor College, the importance of getting the word out about educational opportunities for workers, and the importance of education. Occasionally, a business agent talked in more personal terms. One spoke with considerable pride, for instance, about his son who had gone to college and who now taught at M.I.T.

Finally, the president of Empire State College, Jim Hall, was called upon and delivered a moving statement in which he singled out VanArsdale's steadfast support of education for the labor movement. He concluded by saying, "Who else is there to carry the banner?" As he sat down, Harry said, "Is that all you are going to say?" VanArsdale was a no-nonsense individual who did not tolerate praise very readily, but most of the people present seemed intent on recognizing his unique leadership on behalf of educating the labor movement.

## **The View of a Visiting Faculty Member: An Innocent in Academe**

*by Harold Newman*

On May 21, 1975, Dr. Robert D. Helsby ('58), the chairman of the New York State Public Employment Relations Board, received a letter from Harold R. Newman, PERB's director of conciliation, who had just finished serving for an academic year as a "visiting senior lecturer" on the Ithaca campus of the ILR School. The "Wolf's Road" to which the letter makes reference is PERB's street address and the somewhat scriptural language due perhaps to the fact that his staff was always mindful that Dr. Helsby is the son and brother of Methodist ministers.

Dear Bob:

"Lo! Faculty and students have donned sackcloth and smeared their hair with ashes; secretaries and custodians writhe upon the ground and a great wailing and beating of breasts is everywhere in the Land of the Finger Lakes. For the Son of PERB has forsaken the alien corn of Ezra Day to lie once again amidst the thorns and nettles of the Wolf's Road."

In truth, Blessed Robert, while it does not compare to the conciliation consulship in challenge, this has been a beautiful experience. As Rita and I go through a round of farewell parties and dinners this week, I am reminded again of the many kindnesses shown us by the faculty here. The students, for the most part, have been a pure joy.

I want you to know that I shall always be grateful for the marvelous opportunity I had here. You showed characteristic

courage in pushing it through despite the obvious risk of criticism. Perhaps the bread cast upon Cayuga's waters will help nourish me through the grim times ahead.

Thanks again . . .

Sincerely,

/s/ Harold

Harold R. Newman  
Visiting Senior Lecturer

I was not privy to the negotiations between Chairman Helsby's office in Albany and that of Dean McKersie at the ILR School in Ithaca, but the title *Visiting Senior Lecturer* is a tribute to the creativity and the mediatory skills of both men. Harold Newman's formal education ended with his graduation from high school and one can appreciate that some faculty members might not have looked kindly on his appointment as either a "visiting" or "adjunct" professor. I can only state that during the two semesters that my wife and I lived in Ithaca, we were made to feel most welcome and every member of the faculty was most cordial to us. (We had known and indeed enjoyed the friendship of many faculty members before we moved to Ithaca. I had occasionally guest lectured at the school and some faculty served as ad hoc mediators and arbitrators for the Public Employment Relations Board.)

While the letter to Helsby does contain some exaggerations (!), the references to the "many kindnesses" shown us by the faculty and to the students as having been for the most part "a pure joy" were heartfelt and sincere. I should not fail to mention with especial gratitude two faculty members with whom I co-taught, Jean McKelvey and Byron Yaffe. They were always intellectually stimulating and good fun to be with.

I must confess, however, that I was mildly astonished by some things I discovered at ILR. The fact that I had had no exposure to training either in statistics or in higher mathematics made the language of research as incomprehensible to me as Finnish or Magyar. For four years prior to my sojourn at Ithaca, I had written a monthly column for the panel of mediators and arbitrators PERB employed. And whilst still in Ithaca, I shamelessly decided to defend my ignorance by attacking academic research in labor relations. I quote one paragraph from the column I wrote on the subject:

Although I am of a mind to read either biography or poetry, I have disciplined myself to peruse the learned publications which are written for the labor relations professional. It has been a tedious effort at best—of late it has become quite impossible. The field has been seized by statisticians and mathematicians who by some hideous alchemy twist negotiation, arbitration, mediation and fact-

finding into a series of exercises in integral and differential calculus. The language of the articles (which are frequently interspersed by graphs) is usually that of Econometrics. Nobody, except the newspaper and television pundit, William F. Buckley, whose English always sounds like a translation from scientific German, should even abide a word like "econometrics". It must, however, be said of Mr. Buckley that his diphthongs are graceful.

### Another Perspective

*by Robert Helsby (GR '58)*

After one of our annual soul-searching PERB retreats, I felt that it would be a good move for both PERB and ILR to send PERB's director of conciliation, Harold Newman, to the ILR School for a sabbatical year of adjunct teaching. Harold had earned tremendous respect in the labor relations community, and we felt it would be highly profitable both for him and for the faculty and students of the school.

It was a very sensitive issue from several standpoints. The New York State Budget Office was involved with the funding and this was a new concept. It was also very sensitive for the ILR School since Harold did not possess the degrees normally required of faculty. However, negotiations involving the school, budget office, and PERB were successfully concluded and Harold spent a most productive and helpful year as a "visiting senior lecturer."

As witness to its success in spite of the sensitivities, Dean McKersie called me toward the end of the year and asked if Harold could possibly stay on for another year. Unfortunately, I had to reject this request. In retrospect, I believe that this was an outstanding move and that it played a large part in preparing Harold for succeeding me as chairman of PERB.

I chattered on for several paragraphs more. I think that most of the ILR faculty read the article and readily forgave me. A professor friend did caution that without research nothing in classroom teaching could be presumed valid. That this had some meaning was driven home to the innocent from Albany when, two years in a row, the faculty members voted the outstanding classroom teacher by the students were denied tenure. In both instances it was alleged that they had not done sufficient research nor published enough.

Three years after I left the Cornell campus and returned to my duties in Albany, Helsby retired and I was appointed PERB chairman by Governor Carey. At the first conference my agency sponsored after I became chairman, ILR Professor Robert Doherty was given the chore of introducing me. He said that while I enjoyed the respect and confidence of the labor relations community, "it



does not in our judgment come close to compensating for his ignorance of the mysteries of the chi-square, his disdain for the Phillips curve, his fumbling failure when attempting to do a simple multiple regression analysis...."

I derived great pleasure from classroom teaching. The hours spent in student conferences and in necessary readings in the Catherwood Library were enjoyable as well, but alas, I never learned the skills to which Bob Doherty made humorous reference. Lamentably, I still know almost nothing of statistics. But my year at ILR did add much to the sum of my knowledge. For one thing, it taught me the meaning of collegiality—a word I never used and without the ILR experience may never have truly understood.

## The Student's View

*by Fran Hardin (GR '75)*

I'm one of those ILR graduates who did not enter the field of labor relations, having gone on to the Graduate School of Journalism at Columbia after earning a master's degree at Cornell. But I believe that education is never wasted. As I pursued a career in journalism as an on-air television reporter with CNN and now as a documentary producer, many of the things I studied have been very useful. At CNN, for example, I covered a bitter coal strike in the southwest corner of Virginia. I think I had a leg-up on the other reporters in grasping the issues separating the two sides.

Recently in St. Petersburg, Russia, where I was producing a documentary, my crew and I drove past the Finland train station and I recalled Maurice Neufeld's class where we read "To the Finland Station"—a wonderful account of the origins of the Russian revolution. Something else in Russia also reminded me of Cornell: it was really cold!

With an undergraduate degree in political science from Berkeley, and masters' degrees both from ILR in history and from Columbia in journalism, Frances Hardin is superbly prepared for her unique position with the International Monetary Fund—as a film-maker! She has just completed a series of five videos on the economy of the former Soviet Union and is about to begin a similar series for Africa.

*by Connie Varcasia (GR '79)*

While I had quite honestly not been sure what the School of Industrial and Labor Relations was about, I had always been in awe of Cornell University, having grown up less than an hour from Ithaca. Being accepted into the graduate program of the ILR School and planning to actually attend Cornell meant a great deal to me. However, even then, I still wasn't *quite* sure what it all meant—what exactly was industrial and labor relations?

It came to mean a great deal. I quickly came to understand the unique qualities of the ILR School and of its students and faculty. I remember our graduate orientation where we were told we were the "best of the best." Of course not all of us believed that, but we enjoyed hearing it nonetheless. And then it was time for that first class—Labor Law. It was a bit disconcerting for a group of brand-new graduate students to find that the class was going to be conducted just like a third-year law school class! But I believe that class provided the foundation for everything in the field of labor relations that we were to study and learn over the next two years.

I do remember with great fondness the daily coffee hour in the Extension Building. It provided a friendly, non-threatening atmosphere for the graduate students to interact with each other and members of the faculty. The discussions could just as often be about the latest football game as about labor economics theory or the fine points of labor law, or something as mundane as the long Ithaca winters. Many friendships were formed there that I still cherish today.

All of the faculty provided a terrific educational opportunity to the students and even managed to make learning fun. They were able to inspire debate among and between the students, drawing out differing opinions and allowing them to be discussed without causing undue dissension.

Many faculty and classes spring to mind, such as Paul Velleman's Introductory Statistics class. While taking notes was necessary, of course, it made it difficult to keep an eye on the professor: he would be at one end of the board when you looked down to write something, and by the time you looked back at that end of the board he was, more often than not, at the opposite end of the room! But his anecdotes and stories about real-life situations brought statistics to life, something that is not easy to do.

Among other notable professors and classes were David Lipsky's Collective Bargaining; Robert Hutchens's Labor Economics; Tom Kochan's Public Sector Collective Bargaining; Vernon Briggs's Employment and Training; and John Burton's, Social Benefits. Together they created a foundation on which many of us have built careers.

I graduated from undergraduate school in a class of over 2,500 students. Consequently, the small number of graduate students in my class at ILR (42) was a breath of fresh air. You could actually know everyone in your classes. We came from different backgrounds—some right out of college, some had worked before returning, many single, some married, some liberal, some conservative. However, we were all there with a common purpose: to receive the best education we could. While we may not have always agreed with one another, ILR became a place where we learned, taught, and socialized. In short, for that period of time, it became home.

I believe that ILR has a bright future, as it looks to train the work force for the 21st century. It is never content to rest on its laurels, but strives to address the ever-changing needs of the workplace in a changing world. My hope for the school is that it never loses its vision as a leader in the field, yet continues to remember and be sensitive to the responsibility that always goes with being a leader.

Having earned an MLR degree in 1979, Connie Varcasia spent 16 years as executive director of the New York State Senate Labor Committee. In January 1995 she joined Governor George Pataki's administration as a deputy commissioner at the Department of Labor. She is a member of the ILR Advisory Council.

