**1984**

After being elected Vice President of the College Guild, I became President in 1984 when the President (Virginia Mulrooney) went over to the other side and became a district vice chancellor. Virginia had been outstanding as an advocate for the faculty and was one of the major reasons that AFT 1521 won the exclusive collective bargaining rights to represent faculty in the Los Angeles Community College District. Virginia also was serving as the President of the Community College Council (CCC) of the CFT when she was appointed as vice chancellor. As president of the CCC, Virginia had been spending a lot of her time in Sacramento and I had taken on much of the day to day work of the local. I became president of the Guild upon her appointment to an administrative position with the District.

Virginia’s position with the CCC was filled by Bob Gabriner (a part-time faculty member and Executive Secretary of the Peralta local in Oakland) and I was elected to be Southern Vice President of the CCC. A position I held for many years.

I did not like the job of president much and did not put on much of a campaign in the next election. My rival for the presidency (Hal Fox), who I had appointed to write our union publication, spent his campaign attacking Mulrooney. Mulrooney never forgave him. I did not join his attack on Virginia during the campaign as I felt that each person has the right to follow his or her own dream.

Many faculty members felt that I was Virginia’s choice for Vice President but nothing was further from the truth. Although Virginia and I got along, we often did not agree on things. Our conflicts were not well known and faculty members listened to Hal and voted against me as a vote against Virginia’s style of leadership. So I lost my first election but after a short period of time, the Guild Executive Secretary resigned and Hal Fox got the Executive Board of the Local to appoint me as the new Executive Secretary. It was a much better job than president as you did not have to deal with complaining members as much.

I had always felt that one of the good things about union leaders, as opposed to many academic senate leaders, was that they did not seek to become administrators. It was a great personal disappointment to see 1521 leaders Virginia Mulrooney, Art Avila (became a college president), and Cedric Sampson (moved to vice chancellor for educational research and development) all go over to the dark side. Their movement to administration made members wonder whether they were working for workers or for their own advancement during their time with the AFT.

**Leslie Koltai**

Leslie Koltai was chancellor of the Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD) beginning in 1972. Koltai had been active in the Hungarian revolt of 1956 and had worked for the Hungary Revolution Radio Committee (which broadcast news of the uprising to areas outside of Hungary). He escaped from Hungary and ended up in Austria where he joined the Voice of America in Vienna. I always had the feeling that the CIA helped him to leave Hungary and he was working with the CIA in Vienna. He immigrated to the United States in 1957. He quickly learned English and earned a Master of Arts in English and journalism at UCLA.

In 1960, Koltai became an associate professor of Russian at Pasadena City College. He quickly became chairman of the foreign language department. While at Pasadena City College, Koltai earned a doctorate in education at UCLA in 1967. In 1968 he became chancellor of Metropolitan Community College in Kansas. In short, he went from department chair to a district chancellor.

Koltai reminded me of Henry Kissinger. He was built similarly and spoke with the same accent and tone of voice. He also had a byzantine manner of administration. He would often privately assign two people to do the same job and see which result he preferred. He also had college presidents appointed who he felt he could control. Several popular college vice presidents were not appointed president at the college where they were serving when an opening occurred. They would later be appointed president at another of the district’s nine colleges.

Koltai’s image was very important to him. In 1983 when we were having a tough time reaching a collective bargaining agreement with the District, we were able to sign off on a new agreement just a week before the national AFL-CIO convention was to be held in Los Angeles. Virginia Mulrooney told Koltai that if we settled, he would be introduced at the convention. We settled but he was never recognized at the convention.

Over the years, Koltai and Mulrooney and Sampson became friendly. At one point in negotiations between the union and the LACCD, I had a feeling that union chief negotiator Mulrooney and Koltai had privately agreed to language on department chairs that would reduce the number of departments but increase the added pay for the remaining department chairs. Our Executive Board opposed the agreement when Mulrooney brought it up. She tried a number of times to get agreement, but she was not successful.

In 1984, Virginia was chosen by the Koltai controlled Board of Trustees to the position of vice chancellor of human services. At first, she had been offered the presidency at Los Angeles Valley College where she taught. She had always wanted that position but if she became president at Valley College, the current president (Mary Lee) would be made a vice chancellor. Virginia did not want to work under Mary Lee, so Virginia got Koltai to agree to make her the vice chancellor of human services.

Koltai believed in setting clearer entrance standards and emphasizing the transfer of students – something that was alien to community colleges that enrolled any person over the age of 18 and was “all things to all adults.” Later he showed his negative feelings toward vocational programs by attempting to eliminate entire vocational programs. As a result of a combination of Koltai’s approach to admissions and the introduction of student fees in 1981, enrollment in the LACCD fell dramatically. Over the next few years the District began having budget problems. Instead of looking at the increasing number of administrative positions or other types of expenses, Virginia and Koltai looked to lay off employees to save money.

In 1984, Koltai introduced layoffs of classified employees. The AFT Faculty Guild and the AFT Classified union appeared before the Board repeatedly during the fall to protest the layoff of classified employees and the certificated staffing plan and the reduction of hourly rate staffing. On October 1, the Board of Trustees voted to lay off 47 classified employees with Trustee Albertson abstaining and Trustee Quezada voting no.

At the Board of Trustees meeting of November 13, we packed the house with over 150 faculty and staff. More than forty speakers opposed the layoffs and called for the firing of Koltai. AFT College Guild President Fox and AFT Staff Guild President Kleinschmitt both spoke to the harm that the layoffs would cause. As a result, the Board decided that they needed to review the classified layoffs. No classified layoffs were authorized at that time.

At the February 5, 1986 meeting of the Board of Trustees, the Board voted 6-1 to authorize the Chancellor “to send notices of **Recommendation Not to Reemploy**" to 147 faculty employees of the District." The resolution stated that "it is in the best interests of the District that the number of certificated employees in the District be reduced consistent with the reduction of particular kinds of service." The layoffs were scheduled to take effect the Fall session of 1986. Hal Garvin, now a member of the Board, voted no. Garvin had been one of my mentors at Los Angeles Harbor College and understood the value of a broad curriculum in the colleges..

Th move to layoffs was a real blow to the union which, under Mulrooney’s leadership, had helped elect each of the Board of Trustees members. During interviews with potential candidates for Board elections, each of those elected had promised not to vote for employee layoffs.

In accordance with state law, the faculty members who received notices of intent to dismiss would be "given the opportunity to request a hearing to determine if there is cause not to reemploy them." Such notice must be provided by March 15th of the year of layoff. One cause that could be used to save a job was to find another faculty member with less seniority in the district who had not received a notice of intent by March 15. Hal Fox had, by that time, chosen me to serve as the Executive Secretary of the Guild. It was in that role that I led the fight against Mulrooney’s layoff of teachers. The local and our lawyer immediately began looking for reasons that would result in few or no layoffs.

In all 30 of 185 disciplines offered by the District were targeted. The physical education, health, and recreation disciplines had thirty-nine faculty targeted. Nursing had 20, psychology had 15 and history had 15. The plan included the elimination of Nursing programs at City College and West Los Angeles College. The area around Los Angeles City College (LACC) had a large cluster of hospitals in the area and used the student nurses for LACC. The elimination of Nursing at LACC made absolutely no sense.

In addition, dental assistant, dental technician, motorcycle repair, nuclear medical technology, occupational therapy, optics, vending machine repair, and vision care technician programs would be eliminated. 70 full time equivalent part time assignments were also cut. The plan also included increasing the number of classes in English, mathematics and computer science.

Vice Chancellor Mulrooney led the district’s faculty layoff plan development. The plan made little sense except that certain people identified for layoff were people Virginia had helped in grievances and others that she did not like.

At subsequent Board meetings, Hal Fox said the Board action would have "catastrophic consequences" for the District, its faculty, and above all to its students. The Board was reneging "on a promise of security that you have constantly proclaimed as a policy for the last eight years." Fox concluded that the action was "a present wrong action of a whole series of wrong actions in which you have targeted both classified and faculty since last summer."

Raoul Teilhet from the California Federation of Teachers stated that "A college is a fragile institution. It depends on a satisfied and loyal staff." By "declaring war" on the faculty, "you will lose the heart and soul of the colleges."

By state law, layoffs within a discipline must be in reverse seniority order. The fate of instructors with identical seniority was determined by lottery: One loser of the lottery in the history department at Los Angeles Valley College was Mulrooney’s arch enemy Shannon Stack. Robert L. Pence, after 17 years of teaching at Pierce, lost the anthropology drawing. There were others with many years of service that were threatened with unemployment.

At the Board meeting on February 19, Henry Ealy, president of the Black Faculty and Staff Association, pointed out that of the faculty listed for layoffs, 68 were female, 31 were Black, 11 were Asian, nine were Hispanic, one was native American, and one was Filipino. Trustee Archie Hudson took this opportunity to attack seniority, "We are losing some of our very best faculty and retaining some of our mediocre faculty. Because of seniority, the oldest stay, regardless of quality." With AFT support, Archie Hudson lost her reelection bid. She later became a state assembly member and an avowed enemy of the AFT. I had earlier attended her wedding but so it goes.

I spoke up in favor of the seniority system, maintaining it was the only way to protect faculty from being fired for their political views or because of personal favoritism. I also spoke to the loss of classes due to the cuts. At a Board of Trustees meeting at which I spoke against the layoffs, I was looking at the list of proposed layoff faculty on a district office bulletin board. Koltai came by and said that I was the cause of the layoff because I would not agree to a change in the collective bargaining agreement. I told him “lick my ass Koltai.” He replied that he would “get me for that.” I was standing next to our attorney, Larry Rosenzweig, and introduced Larry to Koltai. The only follow up to that threat that I ever heard about was when the head of the LACCD campus police told me that Koltai had asked him to do something that related to me and the police chief told Koltai that he would not carry out that directive.

The AFT College Guild immediately began to organize the faculty against layoffs. We had groups of faculty members work with each Board of Trustee member. Each discipline was helped to prepare to speak at Board meetings as to the value of their work The organizing effort activated a number of future leaders of the union. We got the Los Angeles Federation of Labor to form a citizens' committee to inform the community of the damage the action would cause. I prepared data to show how poorly thought out the layoffs were. We contacted Legislators to hold hearings on the Board action. In short, we put all the pressure we could on the locally elected Board of Trustees members.

We also began working on interviewing candidates for the next election and raising funds to support our candidates

Larry Rosenzweig worked with each of the layoff notice recipients to assure representation at their individual hearings at no cost to the faculty member. I worked on a computer to compile and organize information on each discipline and each faculty member targeted for layoff.

On March 2, we published my analysis of the variables that the district had used in its analysis leading up to the layoffs. The five variables used in the analysis reflected "the effect of past decisions by the District more than they describe the intrinsic strength of any programs." The first variable was long-term change in Weekly Student Contact Hours (WSCH) between Fall 1982 and Fall 1986. WSCH was a method of determining how many students each department was serving per week. This was supposed to measure changes in demand. I pointed out that "WSCH change is a product of many variables including, if not most importantly, the number of classes offered during each period of time." For example, the agricultural program, in which WSCH had declined, had also reduced the number of faculty in the program. The loss of faculty might have been the cause of the loss in total WSCH, rather than a change in demand.

The district report on the reason for layoffs failed to distinguish between items of correlation and those of causation. I tried to explain to the Board of Trustees the simple statistical difference between correlation and causation. I noted that the report didn’t "seem to reflect the fact that correlation measures association is not the same as causation." I dealt in detail with the failings of the report’s conclusions.

At the Board meeting of March 5, the Board announced that 60 of the faculty who had received layoff notices would instead be transferred to other disciplines in which they were qualified to serve. On Monday, March 10, just five days before the dismissal deadline, letters were sent to an additional 13 teachers. The total was now up to 157.

One of the problems that the district had with the layoffs is that no tenured faculty member could be laid off if there remained a faculty member, in a discipline that the faculty member was qualified to teach in, that had less seniority than the laid off faculty member. Many faculty members scheduled for layoff were qualified to teach in disciplines other than the one they were currently teaching. We eventually found many faculty members who would be protected due to another faculty member serving in the district that did not receive a notice of layoff, who had less seniority.

Trustee Hal Garvin, in an article in the LA Times suggested that "If the layoff proposals had been directed toward areas of declining vitality, it would have made some sense. However, the majority of the instructors to be laid off are in areas where the enrollment is adequate and in programs that are vital to a college's success." This was a very important point. Even some small departments are important as they provide necessary courses for other disciplines. They are vital elements in the provision of a well-rounded education. Garvin also noted that occupational programs were being closed even though the students completing those programs were "immediately hired in reasonably well-paying fields that provide service to citizens of our community."

Garvin attacked the idea that average class size should be considered in the layoffs, he pointed out the folly in using "an average class size of 34 students to determine how many teachers to lay off in some disciplines." He said that this arbitrary number had come from the goal established in the teachers' contract and was being used to lay off teachers in several fields, for which the class sizes at seven of the community colleges "are dragged down by the significantly low numbers at two others—Mission and Southwest." He also pointed out that the money saved by the layoff would be canceled by loss of enrollment (and the funds that the district would not receive due to the loss in student attendance). Layoff would begin a downward spiral of enrollment and funding.

In April, six days of hearings on the layoffs began. Larry Rosenzweig argued that the District's actions were whimsical and arbitrary. He noted the failure to notify disciplines of potential layoffs, misleading and nonexistent advice about retraining, improper and tardy lottery drawings for seniority ranking, confusion about the reasons for layoff (using Average Daily attendance arguments when the announced reason was simply reduction in service), and **reassigning instructors from higher WSCH disciplines like physical education to lower WSCH disciplines like geography.**

Administrative Law Judge Milford A. Maron concluded from the hearing that only 35 teachers should be laid off. The Board, by state law, was not required to follow his advice. The Board did, however, agree that two instructors should not be laid off due to a death and a retirement. On May 7, the Board authorized, with Garvin voting no, the final action to **lay off 48 regular instructors** out of the 147 originally listed.

In June, the Legislature threatened to withhold the District's stabilization funds unless it halted plans to lay off 40 instructors. Los Angeles Assemblywoman **Maxine Waters** led the fight due to the manycomplaints she had received. Her motion originally called for the LACCD report on stabilization funds to be approved by the joint budget committee, but the committee decided to let State Chancellor Joshua Smith determine whether the District's explanation justified the release of the stabilization funds needed by the LACCD.

At the Board of Trustees meeting of July 9, a report on the status of layoffs was reported. The number to be laid off now stood at 15. Twelve faculty members were retained in their same discipline, 87 were transferred to other disciplines, 31were placed in positions to fill vacancies created by leaves and special programs. Eventually no faculty lost their jobs but a few took jobs in other community college districts.

On February 2, 1987, the AFT College Guild issued my analysis of the faculty layoffs and program reductions. I noted that “by the fall of 1986, all but 29 of the 157 targeted still had permanent positions with the District. Of the 29 persons remaining, only 3 persons were not offered temporary positions to replace those on leave (one of these persons had chosen to retire) with the District. Two persons refused to accept permanent positions with the District. Three persons refused temporary positions with the District. The rest of the 29 were temporarily employed doing the same job that they had been doing prior to the layoffs. The entire operation has cost the District hundreds of thousands of dollars in legal fees, hundreds and hundreds of hours of work time, and the loss of the loyalty of its employees and accomplished nothing but pain, disruption, and a deterioration of morale.”

Of the 157 faculty members targeted, 94 were still teaching in the same discipline as before the layoffs. In addition, seven psychology instructors were teaching the same classes as before, but the discipline was now called "developmental communications" or "basic skills." "All of those persons who were reassigned could have been reassigned using the section on reassignment in the Collective Bargaining agreement without any need for letters of termination."

I again took up the issue "whether the increase in Weekly Student Contact Hours divided by Full Time Equivalent Faculty (WSCH/FTE) from 1985 to 1986 has been the result of the decrease in faculty or a rearrangement of faculty or whether it is due to other considerations such as demographics and the increase in the PACE program."

“LACCD's WSCH growth was similar to the increase throughout the state, so that the WSCH increase could not be claimed to be the result of the faculty reorganization. With proper management, the WSCH should have more closely approximated the enrollment growth.”

"The argument that the rearrangement of faculty resulted in higher WSCH/FTE is difficult to sustain when one looks at rearranged disciplines." For example, in anthropology, "The results are all over the map. Increasing faculty increased and decreased the WSCH/FTE as did decreasing the number of faculty and leaving it the same." An examination of the health discipline indicated that "the results are not at all consistent.. . . Each discipline has a different story as to what happened as a result of the rearrangement." I concluded that “the District was clearly not successful in predicting which disciplines would do well and which would not do as well. . . . The District needs to change the way that it makes decisions concerning the pattern of offerings in the District and the staffing of these disciplines. Input from the campuses must be the first step . . . not a step left out as was the case in the ill-conceived layoffs of the Spring of 1986. Consideration must be given to other criteria than simply numbers “

On March 11, 1987, the Board of Trustees again authorized the issuance of layoff letters. The action involved 59 faculty positions in 20 disciplines. This time the reason given for the cuts was budgetary, not curricular reorganization. Physical education and health had 17 positions and nursing had thirteen faculty targeted. Music and art and respiratory therapy were both listed for the first time. The vote was four to three, with Archie-Hudson and Quezada joining Garvin to vote against the motion.

Koltai and I appeared on television to discuss the layoffs. I spoke about how poorly thought out the layoff plan was and to the negative role that Trustee Monroe Richman had played in the movement for layoffs. Koltai did not say anything to defend Richman. Earlier, Koltai and Richman had gotten into a wrestling match in executive session over some issue and eventually it turned into who was the better Jew. They were not friends. In any case, Richman then turned out to be the deciding vote to not extend Koltai’s contract beyond its June 30, 1988 expiration date. A few years later, Koltai invited me to address his class at UCLA regarding community college unions. He introduced me as the person that caused him to be fired as chancellor of the LACCD. What a great honor!

On April 22, 1987 the Board voted to rescind the layoffs.

In June of 1987, Monroe F. Richman and Marguerite Archie-Hudson, two board incumbents who had voted for faculty layoffs and were opposed by the faculty union, lost their reelection bids. Newly elected were union-backed candidates Wallace Knox, David Lopez-Lee and Julia Wu, each of whom ran campaigns critical of top district administration. Hal Garvin, the only incumbent to win the union's endorsement, was handily reelected. Garvin was then elected by the newly constituted board to be the president of the new Board.

On September 30, 1987, Leslie Koltai announced that he was resigning. The Board had privately voted four to three to fire Koltai. Koltai received a settlement worth $365,000 in return for his early retirement. Hal Fox stated that “I can’t imagine any tears” will be shed by faculty members. Trustees Lindsay Conner, Wallace Albertson and Arthur Bronson opposed the settlement. Harold Garvin, Wallace Knox, David Lopez-Lee and Julia Wu-voted in favor of the settlement.

The new Board majority improved relations with the faculty and staff and a new contract had been agreed to. The nightmare was almost over.

On March 17, 1988, Virginia Mulrooney was removed from her position as vice chancellor for human resources of the Los Angeles Community College District with an $87,000 settlement She then returned to full-time teaching. Cedric Sampson resigned to accept a position in another district, and college president Art Avila had retired. Mulrooney called her firing a “corrupt bargain” between the majority of the Board and the AFT. “"This district is run by a Board of Trustees which was bought and paid for by the AFT College Guild, a board which operates as a wholly owned subsidiary of the AFT," declared Mulrooney. Ironically, Mulrooney’s earlier efforts led to the AFT College Guild becoming the prime players in the election of Board members.

Mulrooney’s diatribe against the Board was awful to watch. I believe that she had consumed some noon cocktails (as had become her routine). This once proud leader of the AFT reduced herself to an out of control hysteric. Mulrooney alleged that her recent dismissal and that of Chancellor Leslie Koltai in October were the result of the $14,000 campaign loans, later forgiven, from the union to three trustees the previous year. This was the Mulrooney who led the build-up of the union’s political strength. She said she would call for investigations by the Los Angeles county grand jury and state authorities of the "corrupt bargain" and would file an unfair labor practice complaint against the union. None of this happened.

The AFT Faculty Guild’s Hal Fox wrote that “Mulrooney had proved to be the most warring and hostile Vice Chancellor the district has ever known. She has tried, unsuccessfully, to bypass the conditions of the Collective Bargaining Agreement. Each change proposed by the district in the current negotiations is a result of some personal battle that she has lost with the AFT. This includes such areas as coaching, transfers, reassignments, grievance procedure, summer school, calendar, and holidays. She has been unable to work in any kind of a collegial manner with the AFT or the faculty in general. Even her former associates and friends in the AFT have found her impossible to work with and call for her removal.”

We successfully used the layoffs to activate the faculty and ended up not having any of the over 200 faculty who were targeted actually terminated . Many of those who became active in the anti-layoff fight became the future leaders in the union. For example, physical education faculty member Joanne Waddell was later elected president of the Guild and a California Federation of Teachers’ Vice President. One of those whose job we saved is the outstanding Congresswoman Judy Chu. As a state and federal elected legislator, she has never forgotten the importance of unions.

In 1986, I went on a CFT planned trip to Nicaragua. This was a time when the United States supported contras were violently attacking the Sandinista government and its infrastructure. I found Nicaragua to be in the throes of real change after the overthrow of the dictator Anastasio Somoza DeBayle in 1979. We met with collective farmers and urban reformers. We saw burnt out cars that the Contras had attacked. I came away with a real respect for what they were attempting to achieve in terms of education, health care, and the elimination of poverty. It was a very exciting place to visit.

That summer I attended that national convention of the American Federation of Teachers. The AFT, under Albert Shanker, was probably the most militant cold war union leader in the country. One of the issues at the convention was a resolution in favor of the illegal US support for the Nicaraguan Contras. I was in line to speak against the resolution when an AFT vice president tried to cut in front of me in line in order to close debate. I knew how to block out an opponent from my basketball playing days. The VP fell and the sergeant at arms for the convention tried to get me to sit down. I refused and AFT President Shanker adjourned the meeting until after lunch. When we returned, there were two lines, a pro and a con line. I spoke against the resolution and Connie Rey (the chair at East Los Angeles College and a strong supporter of Hal Fox) spoke in favor of the resolution. It turned out that she had visited Nicaragua on an AFT sponsored trip. The word in the CFT delegation to the AFT convention was that I had hit the AFT vice president. This was not true, but I was a hero to most of the CFT delegates for standing up to Shanker.

When we got back from the convention, Hal Fox asked me to resign as Executive Secretary because I had “made the local look bad” and he wanted to become a national vice president. I told him to take it to the local’s Executive Board if he thought he could get the Board to remove me from office. He dropped the issue, but I did resign as executive secretary in 1987 as I wanted to see a change in the Guild leadership and I was tired of helping Hal successfully do the union’s business. In 1988, Gwen Hill defeated Hal Fox for the presidency of AFT 1521.