

"I recognize GESO":

Attorney General Kicks off GESO Strike

Len Nalencz (GESO)

Yesterday marked the beginning of the first coordinated strike of private university graduate teachers in the history of the United States! As



GESO strikers were joined by members of Local 34 and Local 35 during a noon-time rally on York Street. Speakers included Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro.

hundreds of graduate teachers gathered around the Old Campus entrance, a powerful line-up of political and labor allies—many of them Yale alumni—began to lend support to the unionization effort at Yale.

First on the stage was Connecticut Attorney General Richard Blumenthal, who affirmed GESO's majority status and declared, "I recognize GESO!" Then, Connecticut Secretary of State Susan Bysiewicz energetically repeated her support for a union of graduate teachers at her alma mater. She read some of the issues from the signs that members held up as she spoke. "Health care for families" and "equal work for equal pay!" she shouted to enthusiastic cheers.

The slightly sun-burned picketers revived during a noon rally on York Street, where several hundred members of Locals 34 and 35 spent their lunch breaks demonstrating their solidarity.

The presidents of Yale's two recognized unions, Bob Proto and Laura Smith, reiterated their solidarity with GESO, and Alex Polino, a grounds maintenance worker from Local 35, spoke for many when he told *The Voice*: "I support GESO and their right to unionize." He added, "I'm going to Columbia on Wednesday

too!" Hiba Hafiz of Comparative Literature, one of three GESO speakers at the rally, insisted: "Democracy is a value I learned at this university, and I am teaching that value on the streets this week." Also among the speakers stating their support for GESO were Chuck Appleby, from the Carpenters Union, Professor Josh Freeman of Queens College and a member of PSC-CUNY, the faculty union, and Ken Dagliere on behalf of Senator Joseph Lieberman.

New Haven Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro capped off the rally in her characteristically fiery and inspiring style. She affirmed her commitment to Yale's graduate teachers, linking them with the other working people and their families she represents, and urged Yale's administration to do the same. As do we!

GESO Picket Schedule for Tuesday, April 19, 2005

8:00 Breakfast at Union Office, College and Elm

8:30 Picketing

10:45 Classrooms in the Streets: College St. between Elm and Wall

11:30 Lunch - Union Office

Noon Rally on Elm St.

Guest Speakers:

John Wilhelm, President, UNITE HERE

Roger Vann, Executive Director, Connecticut Civil Liberties Union

Rev. Scott Marks, CCNE

Wednesday join us for a speak-out on the New Haven Green at 12 noon and then get on the bus to go to Columbia University to rally with John Sweeney, John Wilhelm, and thousands of other workers!

More letters!

Letter signed by 7 members of the US Senate "We urge you to honor these strong demonstrations of majority support for participation in unions, to respect the basic rights of these graduate student employees, and to bargain in good faith with the unions they have chosen as their representatives." Edward M. Kennedy, Charles E. Schumer, Hillary Rodham Clinton, Richard Durbin, Tom Harkin, Russell D. Feingold and Patty Murray

Letter signed by 43 members of US Congress "Quality higher education and the right to collective bargaining are essential to building a more just, democratic and equal society. On the campuses that you represent - Columbia University, Yale University, and New York University - graduate employees want to form a union to win affordable health care, fair wages, and a say in their working conditions... ..We urge you, as leaders of three of our nation's finest institutions of higher learning, to respect the democratic rights of these graduate employees. We also ask that you bargain in good faith to reach a mutually agreeable settlement with the unions they have chosen as their representatives."

Letter from 16 Faculty in the Sociology Department at Yale "We believe that when graduate student teaching and research assistants vote to exercise collective bargaining rights, they deserve our recognition and support. We therefore urge you to recognize the Graduate Employees and Students Organization (GESO) at Yale, which on December 14, 2004, in a public petition certified by Connecticut Secretary of State Susan Bysiewicz, demonstrated 60% support."



A group of GESO strikers met with Sen. John Edwards last night to explain why we are on strike and thank him for his support.

Why strike? Voices from the picket lines

"People have come out in big numbers and in a big way. We are here to stay. We're here to get our union recognized,"

Erik Goldner, History (GSEU)

"I'm getting married soon and expect to raise a family. I would like to have healthcare for my child." -

Becca Ashley, Forestry and Environmental Studies (GESO)

"[The strike] moves you closer to recognition.... We don't know what the administration tipping point is.... From a practical standpoint, there's a palpable sense of gaining momentum."

Maurice Leutenegger, Physics (GSEU)

"I don't understand why the idea of graduate student unions makes people so nervous. Such unions are really no big deal. Actually they result in easier relations between the administration and students. Yale could cooperate with its graduate teachers, but has instead forced us to take this position." -

Pan Wendt, Art History (GESO)

"Our struggle with the administration is the struggle of the professoriate in general." David Wolach, Philosophy (GSEU)

"As an undergrad I think GESO's fight is the fight for my university, my education." -

Lauren Burke, Undergraduate History Major (GESO)

"It's a disruption—that's what a strike is about. It's to keep representing a desire and a need that's widespread among graduates.... It's making it clear that there's a will here that's been neglected."

Massimo Grassia, Philosophy (GSEU)

"I'd like to see an institution I care about—I graduated from Yale College in 1997—really place the kind of value on teaching it claims to."

Brooke Conti, English (GESO)

"I'm on strike because women in my department who have children have not gotten their degrees. I'm working to form a new model for women in the academy."

Robin Cowie, History of Art (GESO)