

**Unofficial Transcription of the September 18, 2002
Faculty Forum on Graduate Student Unionization**

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Remarks by Panelists

Edward Lawler, Dean, Industrial and Labor Relations:

“I want to welcome you all to this faculty forum on what is obviously a controversial topic on campus. Dealing with controversial topics is something that universities are uniquely suited to accomplish, in part because of the core values upon which we operate. These include mutual respect, tolerance of views very different from your own, willingness, even an eagerness, to engage such views and analysis and careful, deep thinking about your positions and those of others and how they converge or do not. Today is yet another great opportunity for members of the Cornell community to constructively and productively address what is potentially a hot topic using these values as a key guide.

“My role as moderator is really two-fold. The first is to insure that all views and shades of opinion have an opportunity to be heard, and your role here is really critical. I want to add that you don’t necessarily have to have a firm opinion to make a comment or ask a question or raise an issue here today. And I would encourage those with all varieties or shades of opinion to come forward during the audience period. The second role I have as moderator is to keep us on time and to keep comments within the allotted time length even if that means I have to be a little rude. So I want to apologize in advance to any to whom I might have to be a little rude to enforce and maintain the time schedule. It’s really important because we want to maximize the number and variety of people who can speak here today.

“We will start the session with brief comments from six panelists that Bob Cooke chose in putting this together. I would like to just briefly identify them, and I will do this in alphabetical order: Harry Katz, first on this end, who is the Jack Sheinkman Professor of Collective Bargaining in the School of Industrial and Labor Relations, does work on international industrial relations and human resources; Anne McNeil, a fourth-year graduate student in the Department of Chemistry, second over. She has a B.S. from the College of William and Mary. Mary Opperman, Cornell’s Vice President for Human Resources, one further. (I’m going in that direction.) Next to her, Nick Salvatore, an historian who is a professor in ILR and American Studies and who is a specialist in American History. Stewart Schwab, a Professor of Law who has not only a J.D. but a Ph.D. in economics, and his area is labor and employment law and law and economics. Robb Willer, on the other end, third-year Ph.D. student in Sociology. He has a B.A. from the University of Iowa, and he is one of the organizers for the union campaign on campus. He has been involved since early in the effort. By prior agreement, the speakers will speak in alphabetical order, which means we start with Harry Katz.”

Harry Katz, Jack Sheinkman Professor in Collective Bargaining, Industrial & Labor Relations: “Thank you. I wanted to talk about two things in my remarks. The first is to review the research evidence that exists concerning union impacts on compensation and productivity, and secondly, I wanted to give my own personal evaluation of the University’s labor relations practices with regard to this organizing campaign. First, in this campaign and also as an issue that policy makers and academics in the field are often interested in, one would like to know what effect unions have on wages and other aspects of compensation. There has been an enormous amount of research on that question. What the research shows is that unions on average raise wages 15% to 20% above what workers of equivalent skill would have otherwise earned in non-union environments.

“There is apparently only one study, as far as I can tell, that has analyzed the impact of unions of graduate assistants and their affect on compensation. That is a study recently conducted by Professor Ron Ehrenberg of the ILR School. His study shows, with a limited amount of data but none the less a non-trivial amount of data, that there is apparently

no statistically significant effect of unionization on wages. There is some evidence of a positive effect of unionism on health insurance coverage, on that fringe benefit aspect. The other thing I would just like to add is that it is not surprising that Ehrenberg's evidence shows no net effect on wages. Although, of course the jury isn't in, theoretically there is good reason to believe, for reasons I won't bore you with (if you want to hear them, come and hear my collective bargaining lectures at ILR) that unions of graduate assistants don't, in fact, exert an enormous amount of bargaining power and that may explain why they don't, so far, have an enormous effect on wages.

"A second really important issue of course in any discussion of unionization is concern for efficiency, productivity and flexibility. Here, the evidence goes as follows. Recent evidence shows an enormous and increasing variation in work practices across organizations. The net effect of that is that there is evidence of no systematic union effect on efficiency or productivity. The early research rather surprisingly shows, if anything, that unions exert a positive impact on organizational productivity. They do so by providing voice, by reducing turnover, by providing more stability at the workplace. And again I should emphasize even for those of us who look favorably upon unionization, it was quite surprising to us when this research came out to discover, contrary to the conventional wisdom, unions if anything appear to raise productivity. More recently the research that I and a lot of other scholars have been engaged in shows that unionism is not the key determinant of workplace productivity, efficiency or flexibility. It's work practices that are. What really matters is whether an organization uses high performance work practices. That is what leads to high productivity and flexibility. High performance work practices, in fact, can be found in many unionized settings. Many unions see as part of their mission to improve workplace performance, and efficiency and flexibility because that helps provide direct benefits to their employees and members. It gets them employment security and has other advantages. So one can find case after case where in a unionized environment one finds highly productive, highly effective and highly flexible organizations. One, of course, can find the opposite. Other cases exist in unionized settings where you don't find high performance practices, and you can also find in a number of non-union settings the presence of high performance practices and the opposite as well in non-union settings. Nonetheless, the bottom line result is that the evidence is quite strong that the key thing is not the presence or lack of unionism, it is the nature of the work practices, and you can find extremely productive unionized workplaces. In unionized settings I might add, the key question is what the tenor of the relationship is. Adversarial environments have, as you would expect, productivity problems. Places with a lot of participation and involvement of union leaders and members have highly productive workplaces.

"From now on I will shift to the second issue, my own views about this campaign and the things that preceded it. I want to congratulate the University first on developing the highly positive working relationships it has with the six unions that already exist on campus. As best I can tell, those relationships have actually gotten markedly better in recent years to the credit of this administration. I also want to say that in my view the University has done the right thing in the early stages of this campaign. It didn't stall, delay and go to court like a lot of managements do these days. It engaged in discussions; it reached agreement over the bargaining unit, and we have got rather a fairly quick election. I think to the better. I think that is in the spirit of the law. Thirdly, I also want to say as a faculty member I received on August 27 an e-mail from Sunny Power with a statement regarding how we should conduct ourselves during the campaign. I thought it was impeccable, well balanced, fair and very appropriate.

"What I find unfortunate was the statement made by President Rawlings on September 3 encouraging students to vote against unionism. I think the spirit and tenor of neutrality that was evident in the earlier stages would have been supported with no statement. Fundamentally, the goal of our labor laws is to leave the question of unionism to the employees, free of an environment of coercion or intimidation. Management legally, yes, can make such statements, and many managements do. I think it's a bad idea and quickly, because my time is running out, for the following reasons. I think it is presumptuous of the administration to believe and articulate that it can understand the employee perspective sufficiently to make a recommendation. It's up to the employees to decide, not to management, whether it's this management or any other management. Secondly, the management of this organization is not just the central administration, it's we faculty. And I think making such a statement takes the responsibility from us to be engaged in. And last, but not least, it's bad because I think unfortunately such statements sometimes poison the air and lead to uncomfortable relations if the students choose to vote to unionize. If things do go sour, I recommend that both parties take advantage of the ILR School. We have a wonderful staff in extension; we regularly help the parties move to win-win bargaining in participatory practices. Dean Lawler can tell you who to call. Thank you."

Anne McNeil, Graduate Student, Chemistry and Chemical Biology: "Today you will hear no arguments from me about the rights of grad students to form a union. This forum is not about whether we have the right to form a union, but is instead about whether we should unionize all the grad students at Cornell. I want to encourage everyone to ask

and answer three questions before you vote. The first question is, 'Do we need a union at Cornell?' I don't think so. The UAW only obtained a 3.5% increase for graduate student stipends in NYU's first contract. Yet Cornell already raises our stipends by 3% to 4% every year. Cornell also pays for our health care, something over which unions at other schools have gone on strike. Cornell makes these adjustments in order to stay competitive with both unionized and non-unionized schools. Within the Graduate School, the departments act independently in determining stipends, workload and teaching requirements for their grad students. The departments adjust these factors to compete with their peer institutions for the best students. Frequently the departments will consult their grad students on where and how they can make improvements. Do we want to replace this mutually beneficial relationship where the students and departments work together with one of antagonism? There is no doubt in my mind that the unionization of grad students would most certainly strain, if not eliminate, this effective line of communication, and the departments would lose their flexibility in adjusting many of these factors, as they would all be bound to the same contract.

"The second question I want you to consider is 'Can this proposed union possibly represent the needs of all graduate students?' Our positions vary so much across the departments that Cornell has designated each position a different title. For example, there are TAs, RAs, GAs, and GRAs, so how can different types of grad students collectively bargain for anything? Is the whole going to be greater than the sum of the parts? How can it be? I am a GRA, and the work I am paid to do is my thesis research, so any union efforts to standardize the terms and conditions of employment across the approximately 90 graduate departments could decrease the quality of my education. It also raises the question of whether academic and employment issues can be considered separately as the union organizers claim. For many grad students there is no difference between the work we are paid to do and the work we are doing to earn our degree. As a result, I think everyone will suffer if we have to be forced to compromise on all work related issues when the nature of our work is so inherently different. Union organizers have gone out of their way to make promises of what wonderful things they believe a union can do for us. But I want you to ask yourself a question that the union does not want you to answer. 'What are the costs of voting 'yes'?' Remember that if this unionization occurs, it's extremely hard to undo, and the ramifications may take several years to appear. By then, many of us will have already graduated. We are somewhat unfairly deciding how future grad students will be treated. Consider this. If we were unionized and thus considered employees, we could potentially be subject to the FICA tax. It's an immediate 7.4% deduction in our paychecks. On top of all this, whether or not you want to join this so-called democratic union, we will all have to pay at least 1.15% of our paychecks to the UAW each year, an organization which spent \$6 million on a golf course in Michigan which was built 'to respond to union members' interest in the sport.' Don't forget, as part of this union, you may even be asked to go out on strike, and as a result lengthen the time it takes to earn your degree.

"So let's briefly look at what the UAW gains in this election. If you assume that everyone gets the minimum stipend, and that's a largely conservative estimate, and you multiply this by the approximately 2300 eligible grad students and multiply that by the minimum 1.15% dues, you will see that the UAW will get at least \$350,000 from the pockets of Cornell grad students every year—\$350,000. What do we get in return for giving up all this money? We will sacrifice our individuality, and we will be forced to share a collective vision with which many grad students do not agree. It's not clear that there will be any financial gain. A recent study, already mentioned, by Cornell Professor Ron Ehrenberg provided evidence which 'suggests that graduate student unions do not have a large impact on the economic well-being of their members.' The only certainty here is that if you vote 'yes,' the election will have a large impact on the bank account of the UAW. Lastly, I would like to point out that the opinions I've expressed today are my own, and unlike some of the union organizers, I am not being paid by anyone to say this. I am just a grad student who considers herself lucky to be getting paid to get her Ph.D. So I encourage all students to choose as I have to vote 'no' on October 23 and 24. The voter turnouts at Columbia and Brown were 80% and 90%, so let's try to at least match that level of participation. This important decision needs to be determined by all graduate students, not just a select few. Thank you."

Mary Opperman, Vice President for Human Resources: "I have been asked to be here today to express the university administration's view on the issue of graduate assistant unionization. Some believe that the University should make no statement on the issue of unionization, that by doing so we are creating a hostile anti-union atmosphere. While I do agree that some employers have used aggressive tactics aimed at disparaging unions in general or a particular union, Cornell does not have a history of such behavior, and we will not employ such tactics now. I find negative and disparaging characterizations unhelpful and dangerous, regardless of the stance one takes on the issues of unionization, and regardless of whether such attacks are levied against the union, the University or

individual people. Cornell has a world-class group of graduate students who chose and were chosen to attend Cornell because of their ability to take in multiple viewpoints on any given topic and form their own opinion. The obligation of those who speak on this topic is to present their views and the information in a manner that recognizes the realities on our current and future academic environment so as to give those of you who will vote on this issue as much information as possible to allow you to make an informed choice.

“Cornell has long supported the American and international labor union movements. Our internationally acclaimed School of Industrial and Labor Relations has been in the forefront of this effort for almost sixty years, strengthening both worker and manager in the process. Here on the campus, we currently negotiate with six collective bargaining units, and we do so in a mutually respectful manner that seeks to emphasize mutual gains. The President has, however, stated his concerns about the prospect of having a union represent the graduate assistants. These concerns fall primarily into four categories: potential loss of flexibility and the introduction of standardization, the fundamental change in the relationship of graduate students to the University, the disparate needs of the proposed bargaining unit and the complications that may arise from trying to separate the issues that have arisen in the context of work from those that have developed in the academic arena.

“The University faces increasing competition for the very best graduate students. Faculty have successfully used the flexibility of Cornell’s graduate program to tailor offers to the needs of prospective students. Individual working arrangements have been made that permit graduate assistants to more effectively blend their work and training with their scholarly pursuits. While it must be said that not every need is effectively met and not every student has an arrangement that he or she feels is optimal, it is also true that our graduate students are very successful at understanding their own needs and then pursuing appropriate solutions, and many find this flexibility helpful and important. The introduction of a collective bargaining process moves problem resolution from the individual level to the representational level. It changes legally the relationship of the University to the graduate students. The union will become the sole bargaining agent for graduate assistants on all matters of wages, hours, and other terms and conditions of employment and will determine what matters are brought forward for negotiation at the bargaining table. The University will also create a team that will come to the table prepared to respond and to advance issues as we see them. Under the law, the day-to-day responsibility for making decisions and agreements that will affect individual graduate students shifts from the direct relationship of the graduate student and the faculty member to the union and university representatives. The collective bargaining process tends towards standardization through the introduction of rules and procedures. While this has the potential benefit of leveling the playing field, it also has the potential effect of creating a set of uniform practices that do not meet the wide range of individual needs of graduate students. It is unclear how or whether common contract provisions such as seniority clauses and bumping rights might be used in the graduate assistant arena. Decisions that had once been decided between the faculty member and his or her graduate assistant may become subjects addressed at the bargaining table.

“The potential bargaining unit here is quite large, over 2300 graduate assistants from approximately 90 fields who perform a wide variety of work in different settings, under different academic conditions and with different connections to their own scholarly pursuits. The disparity of needs among the bargaining unit is significant. Can a single union contract set forth working conditions and terms that will be helpful to all who will be covered by them? Will there be a commonality of interests and needs among this large group of assistants? Will it be possible to develop a sound set of standards that can be managed and adhered to? In the agreement of this summer where the University decided not to pursue lengthy and costly legal hearings, the union and the University agreed that academic issues are not bargainable. This means that in the broadest sense there is a common understanding that contract negotiations are limited to work related issues. The challenge will be in finding where that line is on any given issue. Right now all issues arising for a graduate student can be taken through a single grievance process that is overseen by the Dean of the Graduate School. Should the graduate assistants vote in union representation, it is likely that a separate grievance procedure will exist for matters that are work related. Other student matters would continue to be addressed through the Dean of the Graduate School. As many of you know matters that arise between a graduate student and a faculty member can be complicated, with matters that arise from academic initiatives intertwined with issues arising from performance of work. This intertwined nature of work and scholarly pursuits may make it difficult to know how to proceed to solve problems. Similarly the work of the GPSA will be limited to non-work issues, with work related issues discussed through the collective bargaining process. I think the two most important things I have to say, and I think you will hear them often, is we need to keep this conversation at a reasoned level and we need every graduate student to go vote. Thank you.”

Nick Salvatore, Professor of American Studies and Industrial and Labor Relations: “My job is not to tell anybody here what they should or shouldn’t do, but I would like to perhaps share some of my own experience, especially with an eye towards some of my faculty colleagues to raise and discuss perhaps some issues that might be on our collective minds about this question of unionization. When I was a graduate student at the University of California, Berkeley too many years ago, I was a shop steward in the History Department and then in AFSCME (American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees). Local 1695. And while it took a much longer time to get a union contract, partly because the University actually played a very hostile and negative role in its attitudes towards graduate students organizing, nonetheless I had a number of experiences in actually negotiating within the History Department on behalf of the unit that we had organized and was informally recognized by the department at that time.

“I believed then and I believe now that an important part of graduate student responsibilities in a university such as Cornell, such as the University of California, Berkeley and others, are in fact work and work related. Teaching assistants (as I’ve said as a joke but I say it now very seriously) are critical to the running of the University. If for no other reason they keep Tompkins County airport in business, because that means faculty can accept a Thursday afternoon speaking engagement someplace else because they know Friday’s sections are covered. That’s a critical function of this university, and in my experience here in twenty years, graduate students have performed that function with class, with intelligence and with a real commitment to the undergraduates.

“A number of us on the faculty raised the question of how would unionization affect what some refer to understandably as an important intellectual apprenticeship relationship. I would agree that it is an apprenticeship relationship. Certainly that’s how I experienced my own years in graduate school. I would point out that that apprenticeship revolves around a series of connections and interactions between student and faculty member that are not in any manner, shape or form determined by whether or not the student gets this amount of money or that amount of money in a negotiating situation with the university. Essentially an apprenticeship goes all the way back to the 18th Century, the concept, if not even before. Indeed, even in 18th Century America when people were bound out sometimes at the age of 10, 12 or 14, they were bound out often in an apprenticeship within the framework of a contract and a contractual understanding. In exchange for room and board and free labor for some 7 years, Masters, as they were called, taught the apprentice the mysteries of the craft, as often the language was used, and on the completion of the term of apprenticeship presented them with a good suit and a set of tools to enable them to become journeymen in the craft. The analogy is not complete of course, but nonetheless it is something to be thought of. There was already a contractual understanding. We have come some real important distance since then. Now labor law—not only is it legal, which it hadn’t been for much of the 18th and even through the 19th Century, it is now legal, of course, for workers to organize, to join a union if they choose.

“My personal opinion, both from my years as a graduate student as well as my years now as a faculty member, is that I do not believe that graduate student organizing inherently is detrimental to the university. I do not believe that graduate student organizing is inherently detrimental to faculty. Nor do I believe that graduate student organizing inherently is detrimental to undergraduates and their education. Thus, I look forward to the vote and if indeed unionization is approved, I look forward to the negotiations in the good faith atmosphere that I think has already been evident in the University’s position in these past months. Thank you.”

Stewart Schwab, Professor, Law:

“I approach this forum as a bit of a bystander in that with my appointment just in the Law School, we have at most only a handful of graduate students who are potentially eligible to be in the union. Nevertheless, obviously as a member of the wider Cornell faculty I am certainly interested in the issue. I would just remind us again that the national experience with teaching assistant unions is limited. Certainly in the private sector, teaching assistant unions have only been allowed to be recognized in the last two years. We do have more experience obviously in the public sector, and maybe they are similar and maybe they are not. Certainly overall the public sector is a good deal more unionized, perhaps up to 35%, whereas under 10% of the private sector workforce is unionized. Cornell, of course, is not the average private sector employer in that it is non-profit. So again the analogy is there with the public sector teaching assistant unions, but there may be some differences with the private sector.

“As we all know, starting with the NYU decision in 2000, now a number of private universities are experimenting

with organizing the teaching assistant workforce. There is not much specific experience to look at, so we must fall back on the more general experience with unions. I echo several of the previous speakers, perhaps all of the previous speakers, to say that it is certainly up to the employees themselves to decide this issue.

“I think a key issue on this, as with most union drives, is how satisfied or dissatisfied are you now? Are you being taken seriously? Are you not being taken seriously? Is your voice being heard? Is your voice not being heard? I am really in no position to analyze that. I think that is obviously an important feature of virtually any union organizing campaign. I will make a couple of other observations, however.

“One, as I said, most important again is that the individual employees decide for themselves, and I do mean that individually. I think various students will weigh these factors differently. The broad legal test for an appropriate bargaining unit is whether there is a sufficient community of interest among the employees. I’m quite sure that this unit meets that legal test, although again there has been relatively little precedent in the private sector. Nevertheless, I do think that individual TAs and RAs must ask themselves whether there is a sufficient common interest that you want to be bound into this greater voice.

“A couple of points that have been made already, but I will just highlight ones that seem relevant to me. One is, I think, the possible divide, or is there a commonality of interest between research assistants and teaching assistants? These strike me as quite different relationships. Many of you, if not most of you, flip flop back and forth, so maybe that gives the commonality. Nevertheless, I think that is something for you to wonder about.

“Another related area is the statutory versus the endowed. Maybe this is relevant, maybe it is not. I do know that the tuition waiver is very much more valuable in the endowed parts of the University than the statutory. Now to what extent the union in its common position will worry about that or still be concerned about that versus the other benefits, I just don’t know, but it is just another question.

“Finally, there will be differences just within departments or certainly within a college between the truly super-star students and your very good Cornell graduate students. We have no bad Cornell graduate students here, of course. My assumption is, again I’m slightly on the outside, but I would be surprised if this is not true, that in the informal non-union setting, the students whom the department most wants to nourish are the students who benefit the most. A union can probably step in and help the other students who may feel relatively ignored, but where you all feel—I mean you do run into the Lake Wobegon issue—I would venture to say that most of you think you are above average, whereas I think an outsider might say that perhaps 50% of you are. I don’t want to leave on that light note, because I do applaud the seriousness with which the issue is being taken and hope you individually each weigh the pros and cons of your decision. Thank you.”

Robb Willer, Graduate Student, Sociology:

“First of all I want to thank everyone for coming. It’s really great to see this much turnout for discussion of an issue that has really taken off in enthusiasm here in recent weeks. I see this excitement really increasing amongst the graduate students I talk to, and I think this is great. This is something that we see again and again throughout history, groups of people getting involved in advocating for their own rights and seriously committing themselves to that effort. I also want to thank the faculty who have spoken before me who have encouraged our right to pursue better wages, working conditions and benefits through a democratic process without interference. I really appreciate that.

“The first thing that I would like to do is give a quick explanation of the structure of a graduate student union so that we all have a good idea of what we are voting for on October 23 and 24. Following a successful union election, the next step in the process is to vote on a bargaining committee composed entirely of graduate student employees. That bargaining committee then surveys our priorities in an employment contract and takes those priorities to the bargaining table to negotiate with the administration. Our priorities could include higher pay, better health care, childcare or whatever else we deem important. After negotiation with the administration, we all vote on the contract that results, so it’s a heavily democratic process. So that’s the structure of the union immediately following the election. Note the drastic difference between the arrangement and the current one that we have right now, where we have almost no voice in our pay and benefits. This process that I’m proposing not only gets us better working conditions by giving us more power and more say, but also features a high degree of democracy. We vote on the contract that results from negotiation and we don’t vote ‘yes’ on the contract until the majority of us agree we’ve

gotten a great deal.

“Given the simple argument for collective bargaining, it should come as no surprise that TAs and RAs have voted for unionization in every university organizing drive except for one – that’s 33 out of 34. However, there are arguments that some make against unionization. Most of these arguments made against the union are essentially arguments that we as graduate students must be saved from ourselves. These kinds of arguments, perhaps unintentionally, communicate a fundamental disrespect for our ability to vote on things that are good for us and our community. Remember, we are the union. And we’re also intelligent, well-educated adults capable of identifying our needs and wants and advocating for them in the public sphere. And let’s all discourage this disrespect of our abilities to reason out what’s in our best interest and the interest of our community by voting ‘yes’ on October 23 and 24, and then working for a reasonable, but strong contract improving our standard of living.

“I see lately also a fair amount of obfuscation of what collective bargaining arrangements entail. In particular, some administrators have stepped forward and argued that this will lead to standardization that will hamstring department flexibility to pay people at different levels. And I think it’s important to really think about that argument. What does it really mean? What’s really being said? Would we vote on a contract that mandates that departments not pay us anything more if they want to? Or would we instead vote ‘yes’ to a contract that improves the status of all graduate students while leaving departments the freedom to add to that standard if they wish? Like all other graduate student unions, we would, of course, favor the latter strategy that simply eliminates bad flexibility while preserving good flexibility. So when you hear talk of the need to retain flexibility, remember to think carefully about what that means, and ask yourself: ‘Are we capable of discerning good and bad flexibility, and are we capable of voting on a contract that eliminates the bad while preserving the good?’ And I think we can.

“Also I would like to take a second to correct some misinformation that was contained in Anne’s presentation. While I definitely appreciate the contribution that Anne’s making here of an alternative viewpoint, I also think that it’s dangerous on a decision that’s this important – we all agree on that – to let misinformation sit out there. So I want to quickly correct a couple things. First, Anne asserts that we will start paying FICA on our stipends if we unionize, or that we may start paying FICA on our stipends. And don’t worry; this is not true. It hasn’t happened at any graduate student unions in the past and is also not possible under IRS regulations, which make no distinction between unionized and non-unionized TAs and RAs. So I’m curious what the source is of that, because the IRS doesn’t agree.

“Also, Anne said we would get annual raises equivalent to those earned by NYU in the contract that they ratified this spring. And this is unfortunately a distortion of the facts. It absolutely is. On NYU’s side, over half of their graduate students this spring received 25% raises, childcare vouchers, health care for the first time, as well as the democratic rights that come with unionization. And if you wonder if NYU students like this contract, just look at the fact that all but two people in that unit ratified this contract, voted for it in the elections. It’s a unit of approximately 1300 people. That’s how popular that contract was. And so to assert that they did not get bigger increases than us this year is, unfortunately, ludicrous.

“Make no mistake, graduate student unions definitely work at getting graduate students better pay and benefits. If you look at graduate students’ treatment before and after union contracts, there is a remarkable difference to be seen. What’s more, if we trust ourselves to figure out what we want, and we don’t believe the critics of our ability to reason out what’s best for us, then we must vote ‘yes’.

“To the administrators present, please support us in our efforts to work with you to make Cornell’s graduate program the best and the most attractive in the United States. To the faculty, our mentors, please respect our efforts to make your students healthy, happy, and respected. That’s something that should be in all our best interests. And to the graduate students here in the audience, we need all of your support to better our situation together. Like all the workers here on campus, we take great pride in our contribution to this community and we think that our research and teaching efforts help make Cornell great. We’re not asking for the moon here, we’re asking for reasonable improvements to the quality of life of some of the worst paid workers on campus. We’re asking for a democratic voice in this process and we’re asking for the dignity and respect that comes with all of this. On October 23 and 24, you will have the opportunity to show respect for yourself and your fellow graduate students. Vote ‘yes’ for you, and vote ‘yes’ for all of us. Thank you.”

Dean Lawler: “I’d like to thank all the panelists for their informative, provocative, and thoughtful remarks. I think

we're going to have a good discussion. It is now your turn. We have two microphones set up, one on each aisle. There isn't a pro and con microphone. I'd like to emphasize something I said at the beginning especially for those of you who were not here at the beginning. We want to make sure that we get all the shades of opinion out and presented, or at least an opportunity for those to be heard, so I would hope you would come forward even if you don't have a firm opinion, if you have a question, and so forth. Now when you come to the microphone, you can ask a question of one of the panelists, you can make your own comment or statement, you can respond to a comment made by someone else. Bob Cooke made an arrangement based on the panel for David Collum to make an initial set of remarks based on a discussion we had yesterday. Go ahead."

Audience Participation

David Collum, Professor, Chemistry and Chemical Biology: "Yesterday, I was asked to speak here today. I don't know why. In about five minutes, you may know. Let me give you some background. I was an undergraduate here, my parents went here, my grandparents went here, and my wife went here, her parents went here. In fact, I married Ezra Cornell's third great-granddaughter. My kids are his fourth great-grandsons. There is nobody in this university who is more loyal to Cornell than me. I would fall on my sword for this university, and if everyone thought that way, this place would be unbelievable. So, with that preface, what I'd like to say is that I look at this thing and as I think about it, I try to look at the what ifs. My colleagues said, 'Talk quantitatively, Dave.' Physical scientists love quantitative. The problem is that the stuff that bothers me is all the non-quantitative things. All the things that you can't put a number on, the things that you can't see coming. These guys are going to tell you what's going to go wrong if the union appears. They're going to tell you what's going to go right if the union appears. The fact of the matter is within the restriction of a very small number of laws, or should I say a very small number of restrictions, you're going to find out what happens once the union is here. The only hint that you have about what will happen is to look at the history of industrial and labor relations, and I have to tell you, I think this history is checkered. I think the history is very checkered. In case you can't figure out, in this epic battle of what I view as a battle between Cornell's efforts to become a prominent institution, and the UAW's efforts to become a prominent organization, I've got to vote with Cornell on this one. So now, what are the problems? In case you can't tell, I actually didn't want to come to the mike today, because I get so ... crazy when I think about it. So what are these what ifs? And there are some stupid little ones.

"I'm DGS, so what if we can't act aggressively and with agility when it comes to recruiting. We offered signing bonuses last year. We didn't offer them to just the top students. We offered signing bonuses to every single student, because I think the center of the bell curve is the heart of our grad student pool. If you look at the NYU contract – I'll be corrected, no doubt – but it looks to me like the NYU contract says we wouldn't be able to do that. This year we went over to Applied Physics and asked Alex Gaeta if he'd let us see his Applied Physics applicants that they weren't going to take, and we found a couple of real interesting applied physicists who looked like they could be chemical physicists. I'm not so sure we could do that.

"We occasionally move TAs around. We get someone to TA two semesters at one time, and to free up another semester. Can we do that? You'll find out. You'll find out how they negotiate. What I can tell you is Cornell is about 100 financially independent organizations. They're fundamentally different. Chemistry can't even negotiate for Physics, we don't know what these guys need. Think about what will happen when these guys are negotiating with someone in Day Hall. Who is that person going to be? Are they going to be a socialist or a chemist? Now my fear is they'll be from the ILR School.

"I'm going to tell you in my last minutes, in case you haven't gotten the message, this union may go okay. I may be apocalyptic, but if you look at the history of labor unions in this country, I think we're taking a risk here we don't have to take. I think the inflexibility could appear in odd ways, shortened hours, overtime pay required. I'm afraid of this stuff. It may not happen now. A thin veneer bureaucracy could become a thick and penetrating mess in twenty years. Do you really want to look up twenty years from now the way I can and say, 'What the heck happened to Cornell's physical sciences in this place?' We're top ten in every major physical science. Do you want to mess with that? I don't."

Dean Lawler: "There is one ground rule I would like to mention and have you honor, and that is please don't

interrupt speakers when they are talking. Could you please give your name and affiliation?"

"My name is Derek Oler, and I'm with the Johnson School – a graduate student there, a Ph.D. student, not an M.B.A. student æ so that I will get to join the union if the vote is 'yes'. I have an observation and then three related questions. The observation is, in a political campaign, all parties disclose their financial resources and expenditures. And, it's surprising, I check the website earlier this morning and the same type of information is not available here. My questions are, first, how much has the UAW spent on this campaign? Second, how many people are currently being paid by the UAW for their services in campaigning for a union here at Cornell? And third, are equivalent sources of funding available for those who wish to propose a dissenting opinion?"

Robb Willer: "Is this for me? OK. So, the question is how much are people getting paid. I'm not exactly sure how much has the UAW spent on the campaign. I don't know everything about this campaign. I'm not exactly sure what the amount is. There have been grad students who have been put on the UAW staff temporarily so they can help organize. We actually picked the UAW, in part, for this possibility because a lot of organizing campaigns involve organizing committees from the outside communicating what they think is really good about the union to the people to be unionized. We instead wanted a grassroots approach where people within the union explain to their fellow colleagues reasons, you know, what the reasons may be why you might want a union. We think it's a better approach. We interviewed a bunch of unions and the UAW agreed with that approach. They were willing to contribute the resources to help free up extra time of the hard-working graduate students to be able to get out this information. It takes an incredible amount of time. As for the amount of resources, I think the total amount of money spent on organizing probably doesn't match Mary Opperman's salary, you know. The HR department is definitely better paid. I think Mary Opperman should make a lot of money."

Anne McNeil: "I'd like to respond for 'At What Cost?' I believe all our finances are on the webpage and we have about \$280 right now."

Professor Katz: "I have a factual clarification. Unions are required by the Labor Management Act to report their financial information. If you consult that page, you will find even more detailed information than is required of a corporation."

"Hi, my name is David (?). I'm a graduate student in the Sociology Department and I'm pro-union. I have a question for Miss McNeil. I was looking at the AWC website and listed was one concern about the union is that stipends might decrease and I was wondering if you could list specific campuses where this happened post-unionization?"

Anne McNeil: "I'm not exactly sure what's on the website. But I can say that the only precedent we have here is the NYU contract, since it's the only private university which has a union, and the people who were above the minimum stipend got a 3.5% increase and when you subtract dues that is actually less than what we get here currently. So, I think that based on the NYU contract, extrapolating to Cornell, that our stipends might actually decrease as a result. The 24% increase that Robb referred to is just for people who earned the minimum."

Robb Willer: "I'd like to point out that the vast majority of people in the NYU unit were wither making the minimum or actually below it. The situation is vastly different now. Those people enjoyed a 25% increase. Some people above the minimum were not as far enough above the minimum to be pushed up by the 25% raises. Some people had their stipends doubled as a result of this and they needed it. They live in NYC and were having a tough time. They didn't have health care, they didn't have child care options. It's great. And if there are so many people that didn't get such a good deal, why is it that only 2 people voted against the contract? It was incredible. The most popular union contract ever made."

Dean Lawler: "We will alternate microphones, by the way, I don't know if I mentioned that yet."

"Hi, I'm Noelle Chesley. I'm a PhD student in the Human Development department. First, I want to thank all the panelists for their contributions to the debate. I did want to say that I'm in favor of the union and I thought I'd share a few of my reasons why. Some things that I haven't heard mentioned explicitly, I don't think. The first thing I would say is that there a lot of talk about flexibility and I understand that it's a concern. In spite of the fact that we are all these disparate departments, the reality is that there is a central administration and it does make policy. And it makes policy for everybody in ways you may think just is the flexibility between you and the advisor and yet there are rules

on the book. I think it makes sense that given the role of the University, graduate students do have more of a say in how they set those policies. That doesn't mean we will always get what we want, it doesn't mean the administration will always get what they want. It's more of a debate format in how they make decisions which affect the graduate student body. I guess the other thing which I would just add is that, I would like to say that, someone asked the question, I don't know who on the panel, to ask your self about how satisfied you are? I've had a really great experience as a graduate student here at Cornell. But, I have to say in looking around I realize how much my own experience has been sort of dependent on A) the kind of advisor that I have and I don't know how many people have this experience but I personally know 5 people whose advisor relationship hasn't gone well. I think the system works great when everybody is getting along. It's a fact that faculty interests do sometimes end up different than student interests. They have their own reasons for doing things and they aren't always in the student's best interest. It's my hope that a union is one way to try to address this type of problem."

"I'm Brian (?). I'm a mathematics Ph.D. student and I'm also a TA and that's a big part of why I'm here, actually. I need to keep track of my time. First thing is that I want to give you my perspective on my position as a TA. Part of this is that I'm here not only to learn but I also want to be a professor at some point. I want to be teaching and I want to be doing a good job at teaching. Part of the reason I'm here is to learn how to teach well. And I have the very fortunate circumstance where not only do I get to do a lot of practice teaching, get feedback on it, get a lot of people to practice on – those poor freshmen – but they actually give me money for doing this, which I think is a very fortunate thing. I would probably still try to do some sort of teaching and get work on the side if I had to so that I could get the teaching practice. So, I have two questions. The first one will be, essentially, for those who are here and really do not view themselves as primarily employees due to their teaching nature but as people who are being remunerated for services which are useful to them as well as the University. Is there any recourse to exclude themselves from the bargaining unit, be entirely out of the unit of the union, not pay any dues, not involved in the union negotiations? That's the first question. The second is, if there are no such options, what is necessary to disband the union once it's formed? Right now, technically there is enough people here so I don't think this will be the case, but technically one vote could put the union in. If nobody went except for one person, that could decide whether we get a union or not. So, is it a similar situation where if one disgruntled person could, if they organized enough people and get resources – the amount of which are still unclear --? If they involve enough people, could it be disbanded that easily or is the procedure more complex?"

Dean Lawler: "Stewart, do you want to comment on that from the law standpoint?"

Stewart Schwab: "Uh. Uh. First, can individuals opt out of the union? That depends on the contract, that will be decided. This is not a right to work state. Some states are right to work states and in a right to work state you can opt out of a union and not pay any union dues although you will be bound by the contract. That depends on the contract formed here. It is certainly permissible to allow you to have a rule that all members of the unit must be members of the union to the extent of paying dues. You don't have to participate in any other way but the union still represents you. The other question is about decertification of an election. If the union comes in, there will be a one-year period in which it's allowed to bargain and in which no other union could in and decertify that unit. If there is a contract, the contracts are for at least three years from when the contract is signed, and in which no other union can come in a decertification is not allowed. At the time, you should know that you are allowed to decertify the union and that can be done. That can be done either with the arrival of another union, occasionally, but that's not something that's typical, or a vote to decertify."

Robb Willer: "I have some to add too. There is also a provision where you can be a Beck objector and not pay full dues or be a union member. That's one other option. Also, with respect to decertification, the decertification procedure, there is time restrictions on it, but the procedure itself is identical to the certification procedure which is to go on a card drive, show a 30% interest, and then you can hold a vote that you win, or whatever, the other idea of winning, I guess. It's worth noting that with 33 graduate student unions that have been certified in this country, none have been decertified. So the argument that grad student unions are terrible deals, this is excellent empirical evidence, right and the truth is that 33 university graduate student unions have decided they prefer a union to not. That is, 33 certifications and no decertifications."

Mary Opperman: "I also want to comment on the question. The bargaining unit as described, if the union is elected,

that union will represent the people in that bargaining unit. That's their responsibility to represent those who are members and those who are not members. And the universities' obligation is to work through the union on all wages, hours, and terms and conditions of employment for everyone in the bargaining unit. Also, on decertification, the decertification cannot be in any way supported, begun, or involve in any way, the employer. They're a grassroots movement. "

"My name's Matt Garner. I'm a Microbiology student, and I'll have to join the union if it gets voted 'yes'. I'd like to thank Robb for informing me today that McDonald's has the best tasting hamburgers in the world because over one billion have been served. Clearly, since people eat so much food at McDonald's, it must taste great. I wanted to make a lot of points, but he already made a lot of them for me. First of all, I feel very lucky to be paid to do research. I'm an RA, so I get paid to research, and actually I get my tuition waived, which kind of blew my mind when I was a bachelor student that I'd get paid to get an education at Cornell University. So there was just one question that I had. Where does our money go if we have to pay dues? Does the UAW lobby the Republican Party? Does it lobby the Democratic Party? Or does it lobby both parties equally? And I'm concerned that money that will be taken out of my pay check will go to a political affiliation which I do not support."

Robb Willer: "I think that the fact that graduate student unions are popular is a viable point. Again, unless we are making a 'save graduate students from themselves' kind of argument. The fact that people not only want them to begin with but then are very happy with them when they have them and vote on contracts overwhelmingly, I think tells us something about what is in store for us. This is good stuff; you are going to like it. This is what happens. Empirical evidence should be brought to bear on this debate, and I'm sorry for bringing it but it pertains."

"The second point regarding dues—one half of the dues money, roughly, stays here and helps us run our local and administer our union, process grievances and things like that. The other half of it does go to the national and some portion of that does go to political lobbying. That could support Democratic or Republican candidates. It depends on who fits into the UAW's agenda. The UAW's political platform is diverse; they support a variety of things some of which Republicans might not like, such as a progressive environmental platform. Obviously they advocate for labor rights, advocate for the right of people to unionize. Good stuff like people issues, you know, they are pro-environment. If you are a worker in this country or you are worried about the environment in the future, these are people issues and the UAW is advocating for you."

"My name is Sara Sawyer, and I'm in the field on Genetics and Development. I would like to direct this to Dr. Katz and/or Dr. Salvatore. As I understand it the reason you have a collective bargaining unit and the way it works is that you have leverage that you hold against the other side to get what you want. I would like to understand better what kind of leverage we are going to have, because it occurs to me that there are a few differences between auto workers and Ph.D. candidates. So auto workers and other workers work for money and that is the primary reason that they work. If we were to hold a strike, which is supposedly what our leverage unit is, to go on strike, I guarantee my building would still have 99% of the graduate students in there, because we are working for publications; we are working to keep good relationships with our advisors to get good letters of recommendation, and we are working to build careers. Nobody would be here if we were here for the money."

Professor Katz: "I just have a brief response. A lot of the focus has been a discussion of money, and I'm sure that's relevant to all of you, but I would also remind you one of the big questions and it's been well posed by another panelist (I don't remember who) is the question of voice. Unionism is often very much focused not directly on compensation, it's questions of voice. It's up to the students to decide if in an organized form they can create voice mechanisms of their own choosing to be developed with the administration that are more effective at expressing student input. It's not just about money. That doesn't mean to say that's not a relevant issue, but unionism is about both voice and compensation. That's often an issue in any workplace as well as this one."

Professor Salvatore: "I think that the complication in this situation in some ways you have put well. I would put it a little bit differently, but I put it this way to myself thirty some odd years ago at Berkeley as well. I was a union activist and a supporter of the union and shop steward. Yet I told my colleagues at the same time that I was first a teacher, even though I was a teaching assistant and not then a professor, and that I could not in any manner, shape or form see myself striking over these issues because, indeed, my first responsibility was in fact to my students. Now that didn't always win me applauding comments from my comrades in the union at that moment, but I felt that then and I, frankly, for myself feel that now. And yet, as my comments indicate, I remain a supporter, just personally for

myself, of the idea of graduate students organizing. I do think it is absolutely incumbent in the process of negotiation to come up with far more sophisticated and subtle forms of working these issues out, because I agree with you. I think that there will be some folks even who will be strong union supporters who will have great difficulty with that type of an issue.”

“My name is Chad Proell. I’m in Organizational Behavior, and my question is addressed to Robb. First, I have a comment about your example of 33 unions not decertifying. It takes the UAW I believe on average \$250,000 to get schools to unionize, because they have a vested interest of \$350,000 coming in to them in perpetuity. The decertification forces, because the employers are not allowed to contribute to the decertification process, I’m hard pressed to find students coming up with \$250,000 to decertify. The second point, also, I would like to know from Professor Katz when the UAW needs to disclose the information on how much they have spent, whether that is before or after the vote, in particular? I would also like to know from Robb what has happened between the day . . . Robb, I have had discussions with you. You are a smart guy; I’m positive you have had plenty of opportunities to go to other schools. You got this letter from Cornell; you had a big smile on your face, and you said, ‘This is fantastic. They are going to pay for my Ph.D. and I’m going to get money.’ What happened between then and now that makes you decide that we can’t have our own voice to represent ourselves as adults but we need the United Auto Workers to do that?”

Professor Katz: “Briefly, consulting with my colleagues, unions file annual reports and we don’t think they file reports immediately after. They are not required immediately after, but there may well be requirements. I don’t really know. Maybe a lawyer in the audience or a union official would know. I know they file annual reports under the Labor Management Disclosure Act.”

Robb Willer: “I would especially address Chad’s last point. Yes, I am really happy here. I’m progressing towards a degree. I’m happy with my professors; I have a great committee. I’ve had a great time at Cornell, but I don’t think that my choice to come here instead of other universities that accepted me meant that when I came here I shouldn’t try and improve my working conditions and the working conditions for my fellow students. I think that that’s important, and actually I have really been heart warmed by seeing the number of people that have turned out that share that interest in improving my situation and the people that they work next to. I think that’s great. If you think about it, if everyone always just said, ‘I took this job, so I shouldn’t cause waves,’ we wouldn’t have weekends; we wouldn’t have the 40-hour workweek; we wouldn’t have the minimum wage law; we would be nowhere. It’s because people work to better their working conditions that we have the situation we have. We can make it better if we keep doing it.”

“My name is Kevin, and I’m a graduate research assistant in the College of Engineering and I am for the union coming here to Cornell. I want to address something I’ve heard when I’m talking to my colleagues about whether they are for or against the union. A lot of people feel like, ‘Well, you know, I’m lucky to be here and so I’ll just take what they give me,’ or ‘I’m studying, so I shouldn’t be concerned about my wages.’ I personally couldn’t be here if I weren’t being paid for the research I do. I think it’s good work. I think that if they paid my advisor to do it, they would have to pay him five times more, so they pay me to do it. I think that the education isn’t free. If I were on the open market doing equivalent work, I would be paid \$50,000 instead of \$20,000. So the difference is what it costs for me to get an education, and the upside is that I get a Ph.D. When I get out of here, I can go make \$100,000. It doesn’t bother me that I am both an employee and a student. I don’t see that there is a contradiction in the two things. I think that it’s an apprenticeship and that’s why I’m being paid less.

“I had a specific question to Professor Katz if my time is still good. In his statement to the community President Rawlings seemed to draw a distinction between Cornell’s positive relationship with its organized workers, other employees of Cornell, and some specific circumstances about graduate students made him feel like it was a bad idea to unionize graduate student employees. I was wondering if you knew what the administration stance was when the other employees were trying to unionize, not now when they exist and it has a positive atmosphere, but when they were attempting to unionize whether the administration took a positive, negative or what have you stance on that.”

Professor Katz: “I don’t know. Does anyone know?”

Lance Compa, ILR School: “The Cornell University case in 1970 established the proposition that private universities come under the jurisdiction of the National Labor Relations Act. At the time Cornell, as was the policy for other

private universities at the time, sought to exclude itself from coverage of the National Labor Relations Act, so that it wouldn't be faced with unionization by any of its employees. But the Cornell decision was the landmark decision in 1970 that established the proposition that the National Labor Relations Act allows employees of private universities to avail themselves of the protection of the Act and have elections and engage in collective bargaining."

"My name is David. I'm from the ILR School as well. I'm a graduate assistant. I have one question, but I would like to direct it to two people. It's a specific concern and it has arisen in the past one week. I'm pro-union, by the way, and this concern of mine came within the past week. First to Mary Opperman and then to Robb, I have a really bad toothache, and I am really worried about going to the doctor, because I know that if I do go to the doctor and it turns out to be a root canal that I need, it will cost me approximately 10% of my annual salary here at the university to get that root canal. Why don't we have dental? That's the question. What are the issues around that? In these past eight years that we have tried to get health care—Anne was saying that we have a health care system. Our health care system sucks. The health care system works if you don't get sick. So Mary Opperman, why don't we have dental? Please answer that. Robb, after Mary answers that, could you tell us what the voice of the graduate students right now is in terms of their priorities? What do they want? Do they want dental/vision care? Actually he can speak for the majority of the students. We have blue cards that pledge your support for the union and on the back of those blue cards you have a priority list. On the back of that card you can check off what your priorities are and therefore we have more of an idea of what priorities are for the students."

Mary Opperman: "The issue of the need for and the cost of health benefits of any kind including dental in health benefits is probably the single biggest issue facing employers these days. The simple answer to your complicated question is it's a very costly thing to do, and the money needs to be carved out, and it needs to be prioritized among all the other costly issues. It is a very expensive endeavor. We face health benefit increases in the double digits, over 20% a year lately, and it has made it difficult for us to continue even the benefits we have, let alone to add any new ones."

Robb Willer: "Yes, I do hear a lot of similar stuff on the ground, actually. I had a friend who had to get only two of his wisdom teeth taken out before getting a job, a tenure track position, when he had enough money to get the last two taken out. The situation is serious to us. We want dental care. At least a huge proportion of the people I talk to say, 'Yeah, I would like to have dental care.' That's natural, right? Wouldn't you like to have dental care? So if enough people feel like they want to work to get dental, optical, improved quality of health care, then that's going to be a high priority when we go into bargaining. But it is subject to a democratic process, so it requires all of you saying on a bargaining survey that comes out after we win the election, saying, 'This is what's important to me. Dental is a high priority.' If pay and benefits are more important to you, we'll argue for that first. That's how it works. The biggest issues I hear, anecdotally and also through this ad hoc survey we put on the back of our newest union cards, are improved pay and benefits, quality of health care, better grievance procedure that doesn't terminate with the administration, and dental and optical care."

Anne: "I would just like to make a comment. I talked to somebody over in the Office of Labor Relations who has dealt with the unionized employees on campus. There has been a UAW union on campus for over 20 years, and they do not have dental or optical benefits. And it's not because they didn't ask, it's just because they didn't determine that that was a priority over other things like increased pay."

UNKNOWN: "Who's talking?"

Robb: "Is that meant as a criticism?"

David: "Oh, so the correction is that we do have dental?"

Anne: "Isn't it coverage where you have to buy the plan?"

Several respondents unknown and not at microphone were evidently providing information on the issue of dental coverage for graduate students.

Mary Opperman: "The University put forward dental benefits a few years back, and we offered those benefits to unionized workers as well as the non-unionized workers. We do not have a vision plan for any workers on the

campus.”

Unknown: “I’d like dental. Thank you.”

“Hi, my name is Neil Bettez. I’m a graduate student in the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology. Before I get to my question, I would like to . . . we were asked to look at the spotty history of unionization here in America, and I have to question that. A group that has fought for workers’ rights, and workplace safety and health care, I’m not sure how that could be considered a spotty record. I would also like to say that, Mary, you just mentioned that the University may find it difficult to even continue with our health care benefits because of the 20% increases. This makes me even more likely to join a union.

“So my question is that President Rawlings’ statement concerning graduate student unionization—he said that in his view unionization will complicate the relationship between graduate students and their faculty advisors. After a great deal of searching, I have been able to find only one peer reviewed study, published by Gordon Hewitt in 2000 that addresses this question. Its results directly contradict President Rawlings’ opinion. In this study Hewitt questioned faculty members at university campuses where graduate students had been unionized for at least 4 years. His results show that more than 90% of these faculty members do not have negative attitudes towards graduate student unionization and that they believe that it does not interfere with their ability to advise, instruct or mentor their graduate students. My question to you is as follows. Do you know any peer reviewed scientific study that backs up President Rawlings’ personal opinion on this issue? If not, why as a scientist should I believe one man’s opinion in the face of scientific data?”

Mary Opperman: “Let me start by clarifying my point on the cost of health care. What I said was that with health care increases in the double digits and rising to at or above 20%, we continue to struggle to find the funding to continue the benefits that we already have. In terms of your second question, no, I do not know of empirical studies. I believe that what President Rawlings presented was his opinion. I think he stated it as such.”

“My name is Julie Hodek, and I’m a research assistant in the ILR School, and I support having a voice at Cornell. This question is for Robb Willer. Can you tell me what efforts the GPSA has made in addressing the concerns of graduate employees?”

Robb Willer: “They worked for 7 or so years to try and get us health care, along with the Dean of Graduate School, Walter Cohen. I think that the stretch of time that it took for us to actually get health care shows the efficacy of unionization, which tends to get it in the first contract. So if we had gone that route before, we would have gotten what we needed a lot faster. This is not to slight the leadership of the GPSA, some of whom I see in the audience or past leadership, but it is just not a body that the University is legally bound to bargain with over bread and butter issues in particular. They can address academic issues and have done so well in the past, and I definitely, wholeheartedly hope they continue to do so. But on employment issues, I can’t think of one case where they have succeeded in getting us raises and health care. Let’s think about that. After 7 years of fighting, they weren’t getting anywhere, and then we got it the week that NYU made it legal for us to organize a union. So that’s the effect of a union 300 miles away.”

Dean Lawler: “We have about six minutes left and a lot of people lined up. Let’s see if we can move a little faster.”

“My name is David Broyles. I’m a Ph.D. student in Chemistry. Just a quick comment that a lab mate of mine got a root canal, and he actually applied, I forget through what, but he got some compensation to help pay for that root canal, so there are opportunities to get compensation for dental. I personally have had a \$1000 MRI to make sure I didn’t have a brain tumor and also a \$10,000 surgery just last year, so I am very appreciative of the health care that we have here. My question, I guess is for Robb. You mentioned that we would vote to form a bargaining committee. What is the composition of that committee? How many people? Is it going to be like the Senate with 2 per department? Is it going to be a proportional thing? Will it be based on the money the departments bring in? How is that going to be distributed?”

Robb Willer: “The way it works is that the people who are eligible to vote are the people in the unit. The TAs, RAs, GAs and GRAs here at Cornell are the ones eligible to vote on candidates and any one of them is eligible to run.

There is no waiting for the funding of departments. There is no waiting for the composition size of departments. And the typical bargaining committee usually is, I think, double digits, but I'm not really sure. But, yes, you are eligible to run. We are all eligible to run. We are all eligible to vote. So we create representation from us. So it's a good system."

UNKNOWN: "Yes, I'm glad that someone reminded us that we do have representation already and that is the GPSA. They may be ineffective, but if that's the case, how can we make them stronger? Because I would, personally, much rather have our own representation than something coming from this massive organization who has interests of their own.

"I have a couple of other questions. Why isn't Ron Ehrenberg on this panel? He has studied this. He should be here. I hope he can get a few words in before we leave here. Just another point. I'm still undecided, and this may be hard to believe. One thing I do think. When I came here I feel that I bargained when I came here. They told me exactly what I was getting and what I wasn't getting. I knew that when I came here, and I used that to make a choice of coming to this school versus another school. I think that is just something that people should remember. I would like to see dental, but had another school had that I suppose I might have considered that in my decision. Just one last thing about unions. I believe they also have had a checkered past. They have definitely had their day, and I just hope when people are looking at unions, that they won't conflate the games of the past with the present situation. Just consider the present and look at the facts very carefully what they have to offer now."

"Hi, my name is Gabriella Sandoval. I'm a Ph.D. student in Sociology. My question is directed to Mary Opperman and Robb Willer, and it has to do with the grievance procedures that are available to us as graduate students. I also want, like a colleague earlier, to be a professor, and I very much value the opportunity to teach undergraduates. But let me just say that this semester I was assigned to Sociology 101. We have 200 students in the class and 2 TAs. So just to give you an idea, over the course of the semester I will grade over 500 papers, and the other TA might have to grade more depending on the levels of fluctuation. There is no enforced cap on the number of students in our sections, and I believe that undergraduates should have the opportunity to get a quality education. I just don't believe that 54 people in a section allows for that kind of quality.

"I also have had experiences with sexual harassment at this campus and have been told by administrators not to pursue any formal action. I have colleagues who have done laundry for professors. I have colleagues who currently are doing the reading for professors and writing professor's lecture notes and have been told that they should approach their DGS. This is their DGS. I've dealt with the Ombudsman. There just seems to not be a really efficient way or a way that is outside a conflict of interest to address some of these issues. So I would like to ask Mary Opperman what other venues are available to us? Also, to address the fact that Henrik Dullea's editorial in the Sun was truncated in terms of what that process is. So if you could explain that process, maybe tell me what other options are available? Then, Robb, I don't know if you know what kinds of things have happened at other universities with respect to grievance procedures?"

Mary Opperman: "There is a grievance procedure for all matters that graduate students face that starts at the departmental or field level and moves up through the college, finally ending at a problem solving step at the Dean of the Graduate School. That process has resulted in the resolution of most cases before the Dean of the Graduate School has had to make a final decision. On matters of sexual harassment, the students have the same grievance mechanism, complaint mechanism, available to them that the staff do, and that is through my office, the Office of Workforce Diversity, Equity and Life Quality. It is a formal review process with an investigation and a finding."

Robb Willer: "To answer the second part of the question. Grievance procedures at other universities that have become unionized have been neutral. The grievance procedure is set up in cooperation between the administration and the group of employees, people who would be filing grievances. What you have found is that it doesn't start at the Department level, which has a huge deterrent effect on any grievance when you have to bring it to somebody on your committee, or your DGS, or someone you have to go to work with. You get around that deterrent effect, and people wind up saying what is happening to them and you hear injustice that actually is hiding below the surface. I'm glad Gabby pointed it out. Also, we can create, and other grad student unions have created, grievance procedures that do not terminate with an administrator, which is an obvious conflict of interest to a grievance procedure that is supposed to serve our interest and balance that with the administration's. When it terminates with the Provost, there

is no way you can really find justice. When you have a grievance against an administrator, how could you? So, that's the short answer. The history of union grievance procedures has been making them more approachable and making them more effective. That's what we would like to do here."

Mary Opperman: "Can I just make one more comment? Which is that matters that are uncomfortable for any person on this campus to take through the stated grievance procedures, and this includes unionized employees, they are free to go to the Ombudsman Office, through any number of mechanisms, including skipping steps and going directly to the person you think is the most available in terms of solving problems. These are flexible procedures, set up with steps, but not rigid requirements that you go through them step by step."

Dean Lawler: "It is six o'clock. It is one minute after six. We must stop at six o'clock. I just want to thank you all for your cooperation. I think it has been a good discussion. We have observed those basic values and enacted them very well in my view that I mentioned at the outset."

Dean J. Robert Cooke: "I wanted to repeat the invitation for you to attend a session one week from today. It will be in Bache Auditorium in Malott Hall. It will deal with another issue of significance to the long-term future of the University's land grant missions. I would repeat the invitation that if you have further comments you wish to offer, we can post them on the faculty on-line forum. We already have some studies posted there in preparation for you to make use of. I wish to thank you for attending today and for making this a very thoughtful discussion. I invite you to join me in thanking the panel for their role."