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Schenectady Federation of Teachers, Local 803; Records

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M.E. Grenander Department of Special Collections & Archives

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Summary Information

Repository:	M.E. Grenander Department of Special Collections & Archives
Title:	Schenectady Federation of Teachers, AFT Local 803 Records
ID:	apap036
Date [inclusive]:	1918-1989
Physical Description:	6 Reels
Physical Location:	The materials are located onsite in the department.
Language of the Material:	English .
Abstract:	The City Teachers Association of Schenectady was founded in 1918 to promote standards of professionalism in teaching. The group was chartered as a union, the Schenectady Federation of Teachers, in 1944. Local 803 went on strike in 1975 in violation of the NYS Taylor Law. The local is affiliated with New York State United Teachers, American Federation of Teachers.

Preferred Citation

Preferred citation for this material is as follows:

Identification of specific item, series, box, folder, Schenectady Federation of Teachers, AFT Local 803 Records, 1918-1989. M.E. Grenander Department of Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, University at Albany, State University of New York (hereafter referred to as the Schenectady Federation of Teachers).

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Administrative History

The first association of teachers in Schenectady, N.Y., was the Schenectady branch of the New York State Teachers' Association. Although the date of formation for that organization cannot be determined, it was defunct by 1918. [1] On January 17, 1918, teachers in Schenectady, N.Y., met to organize the City Teachers' Association of Schenectady, which would represent all professionals in the city's department of education. The initial impetus for the formation of the association appears to be improving teachers' salaries, though the association was also probably formed to replace the city branch of the State Teachers

Association. [2] By 1932 the association was affiliated with the National Education Association (NEA). [3]

Teachers in Schenectady assumed heavier schedules during the great depression to help lighten the city's budget, but these schedules continued into the mid-1940s. [4] During World War II, the salaries of teachers in the Schenectady school district did not rise with the rise in the cost of living. From 1941 to 1944, all city employees with the exception of teachers were given annual \$100 cost of living adjustments. In 1943 the City Teachers' Association began asking its members for ideas on how to remedy this problem, and one of the solutions was the formation of a union. The teachers considered affiliation with the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), and after sufficient members signed up as prospective members, the Schenectady Federation of Teachers, AFT Local 803 was formed. [5]

One of the earliest dilemmas, besides pay raises and reduction of work loads, for the Schenectady Federation of Teachers (SFT) was merit rating (or merit pay) which was instituted by the Schenectady Board of Education in 1948. The Schenectady system of merit rating consisted of 15 preliminary and automatic steps coinciding with increments in pay. However, to reach Step 16, a teacher had to undergo the official merit rating process. Twenty-seven of the teachers who went through the rating process were not granted promotions in the 1950/51 school year. This prompted SFT to decry the inequities in the system, including the subjectivity of raters' decisions and the lack of sufficient or in-depth evaluation. By the early part of 1952 and after pressure from SFT, the Schenectady Board of Education had abolished merit rating. [6]

Early in 1967, SFT welcomed the appearance of a Schenectady Teachers Association (STA) newsletter in teachers' mailboxes. The STA, affiliated with the New York State Teachers Association (NYSTA) and the National Education Association (NEA), was apparently not yet viewed as a competitor. [7] Soon after, both STA and SFT were supporting petitions calling for an election to choose between them for the exclusive bargaining rights to Schenectady's teachers [8], and by September of that year STA had already won the right to represent teachers in Schenectady. [9] One reason for STA's success was probably a feeling among some teachers that SFT was not a professional organization and that it was too closely allied with labor. During 1972, the Public Employee Relations Board held another election to determine representation for the employees of the Schenectady City School District. [10] SFT was the overwhelming winner in the election. [11] Ironically, in 1972 New York State Teachers Association (NYSTA, affiliated with NEA) and United Teachers of New York (UTNY, affiliated with AFT, AFL-CIO) merged to form New York State United Teachers (NYSUT), thereby making all organized teachers in the state members of both AFT and NEA. [11]

Since its inception, the Schenectady Federation of Teachers has been opposed to the use of strikes in resolving disputes, but the local has also recognized that strikes might be the only way to solve some problems. In September 1975, SFT went on strike after being unable to negotiate a contract over the issue of class size. [12] The strike lasted 14 days and resulted in SFT's winning its negotiating point. Since strikes by public employees are illegal under New York State's Taylor Law, a number of the members (including the president) of SFT were prosecuted and sentenced to short jail terms. [13]

The 1975 strike (which coincided with a number of other teacher strikes in the Capital Region) was one small incident that brought out animosities in New York between NEA (which viewed itself as a professional organization) and NYSUT (which had continued to view itself as a labor organization of education professionals). [14] A major disagreement between NEA and NYSUT was that NEA required all locals to be represented by the same percentage of ethnic and racial minorities as existed in the state's

population. NYSUT argued that this goal simply was not possible in many of its locals. [15] By July 1976, SFT had voted to disaffiliate with NEA. [16]

The 1980's have been spared the drama of strikes and disaffiliation, but the Schenectady Federation of Teachers continues to try to ensure that teachers are involved in decision making in the city school district. An example is SFT's desire to have a voice in the plans to reorganize the Schenectady city schools which were discussed from 1987 to 1990. The local has also continued to add to its ranks segments of the school district work force that it considers appropriate to its jurisdiction, such as teachers in the Living Center and the ESL (English as a Second Language) tutors. [17]

1. City Teachers' Association of Schenectady. Minutes, January 24, 1918.2. City Teachers' Association of Schenectady. Minutes, January 17, 1918.3. City Teachers' Association of Schenectady. Minutes, May 23, 1932.4. Subject Files. General Files, 1944-45. "A committee of teachers representing the Schenectady Federation of Teachers appeared before the Board of Education at its regular meeting Tuesday afternoon," December 1944.5. SFofT News, April 1964.6. "The Story of Merit Rating in Schenectady, New York," March 4, 1952.7. Schenectady Federation of Teachers Newsletter, January 27, 1967.8. Schenectady Federation of Teachers Newsletter, March 20, 1967.9. Schenectady Federation of Teachers Newsletter, September 25, 1967.10. Subject Files. Schenectady Teachers Association Decertification, 1969, 1972.11. SFT, April 3, 1972.12. Subject Files. "Strike," 1975.13. Subject Files. "Strike," 1975.14. SFT Pipeline, January 23, 1976.15. SFT Pipeline, February 6, 1976.16. SFT Pipeline, July 1976.17. SFT Pipeline, undated, circa Fall 1989.

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Scope and Contents

Although the records of the Schenectady Federation of Teachers contain a complete set of minutes from 1944 (and minutes for its predecessor organization from 1918-1934), the most useful records for studying the history and opinions of the local are its newsletters and subject files. The newsletters are an almost complete record of what SFT told its rank and file members. Since these members would not otherwise know the whole story of what was happening at any given point, the newsletters are usually clear about incidents, reactions and decisions concerning SFT. Minutes, written mostly by and for the officers of the local, are therefore often cryptic to the outsider and do not divulge as much information as do the newsletters.

The records of the Schenectady Federation of Teachers show how labor union activism grew out of the definite needs of teachers in Schenectady. Major issues confronting the union were teachers' salaries and workloads (especially 1927-44); merit pay (1948-52); and school reorganization (1987-90). For related records see those of the Schenectady Area Labor Council, AFL-CIO, and IUE Local 301, which contain some information about support they gave SFT (especially during the 1975 strike).

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Arrangement of the Collection

The collection is organized into two series, and series 2 is divided into two subseries by format.

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

M.E. Grenander Department of Special Collections & Archives

Revision Description

Converted to EAD Encoded in EAD by Geoffrey A. Huth 2016 December 1990 March 29

Processing Information

Processed in 1990 by Geoffrey A. Huth.

Acquisition Information

All items in this manuscript group were lent to the University Libraries, M.E. Grenander Department of Special Collections and Archives, by the Schenectady Federation of Teachers, AFT Local 803, and subsequently microfilmed as a part of the Harry Van Arsdale, Jr., Labor History Project. The originals have been returned to the Schenectady Federation of Teachers.

Access

Access to this record group is unrestricted.

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Controlled Access Headings

- Labor laws and legislation -- New York (State).
- Teachers unions -- New York (State) -- Schenectady.
- Merit pay -- New York (State) -- Schenectady.
- Labor unions -- New York (State) -- Schenectady.
- Records
- Minutes
- Newsletters
- Labor
- Education
- Schenectady, New York
- New York State United Teachers.
- National Education Association of the United States.
- American Federation of Teachers. Local 803 (Schenectady, N.Y.)
- City Teachers Association of Schenectady.

Collection Inventory

City Teacher's Association of Schenectady, 1918-1943

Physical Description: 0.25 Reels

Arrangement

Arranged alphabetically and chronologically thereunder.

Scope and Contents

These records of the City Teachers' Association of Schenectady include minutes (1918-34), and general files (1937-43) which contain bulletins, correspondence and other records. Also included in these records are the minutes

of the Delegate Assembly of the Department of Public Instruction of Schenectady (1928-31), which was a body consisting of members from the faculty, staff and supervisory personnel of the Schenectady City School District.

Title/Description	Instances
General Files, 1937-1943	Reel 1
General Files, 1940-1943	Reel 1
Minutes of City Teacher's Association of Schenectady, 1918-1924	Reel 1
Minutes of City Teacher's Association of Schenectady, 1924-1934	Reel 1
Minutes of Delegate Assembly of the Department of Public Instruction of Schenectady, 1928-1931	Reel 1
Newspaper Clippings, 1933	Reel 1

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Schenectady Federation of Teachers, AFT Local 803, 1944-1989

Physical Description: 5.75 Reels

Minutes, 1944-1989

Physical Description: 2.5 Reels

Arrangement

Arranged chronologically.

Scope and Contents

Most of the minutes of SFT meetings are interfiled: regular, executive committee and building directors' meeting filed together chronologically. Regular meetings are uncommon, usually consisting of an annual meeting at the beginning of the school year. After 1979, the minutes are separated first by type of meeting and then chronologically.

Title/Description	Instances
Charter, 1944	Reel 1
Minutes of Regular Meetings, Executive Committee Meetings, and Building Directors' Meetings, 1944-1979	Reel 1
Minutes, 1944-1951	Reel 1
Minutes, 1951-1955	Reel 1
Minutes, 1955-1975	Reel 2
Minutes, 1974-1975	Reel 2
Minutes, 1975-1976	Reel 2
Minutes, 1976-1977	Reel 2
Minutes, 1977-1978	

	Reel 2
Minutes, 1978-1979	Reel 2
Minutes of Executive Committee Meetings, 1979-1989	Reel 3
Minutes, 1979-1980	Reel 3
Minutes, 1981-1982	Reel 3
Minutes, 1982-1983	Reel 3
Minutes, 1983-1984	Reel 3
Minutes, 1985-1986	Reel 3
Minutes, 1986-1987	Reel 3
Minutes, 1987-1988	Reel 3
Minutes, 1988-1989	Reel 3
Minutes of Building Directors' Meetings, 1973-1976 1978-1980 1983-1989	Reel 3
Minutes, 1973-1976	Reel 3
Minutes, 1978-1980	Reel 3
Minutes, 1983-1984	Reel 3
Minutes, 1984-1986	Reel 3
Minutes, 1986-1987	Reel 3
Minutes, 1987-1988	Reel 3
Minutes, 1988-1989	Reel 3

Subject Files, 1944-1987

Physical Description: 2.25 Reels

Arrangement

Arranged alphabetically.

Scope and Contents

The subject file includes general files (1944-53), which contain various types of material (bulletins, correspondence, etc.) in chronological order; president's files (1942-55) which are general files kept by the SFT president; contracts (1967-87); photographs (1975, 1978-79); and correspondence, flyers, photographs and picket bulletins pertaining to the 1975 strike (1975-76).

Title/Description	Instances
Building Director's Handbook, ca.1975	Reel 4
Bulletins to Teachers, 1953-1965 1971-1972 1977 1979 1984	Reel 4
Calendars and Agendas, 1956-1969	Reel 4

Constitutions, ca. 1944-1955-1967-1972-1976-1980	Reel 4
Contracts, 1967-1971-1973-1975-1977-1978-1980	Reel 4
Contracts, 1982-1984-1987	Reel 4
Convention and Conference Reports, 1974	Reel 4
Crisis Committee, 1984-1985	Reel 4
Curriculum Committees, 1971-1972	Reel 4
Educational Policies Advisory Committee, 1970-1973	Reel 4
Forum and Dinner Meeting Programs, 1946-1948-1954-1956-1960	Reel 4
General Files, 1944-1945	Reel 4
General Files, 1946	Reel 4
General Files, 1947	Reel 4
General Files, 1948-1949	Reel 4
General Files, 1950	Reel 4
General Files, 1951-1953	Reel 4
Graduate Steering Committee, 1972	Reel 4
Liaison Committee, 1956-1961	Reel 4
Liaison Committee, 1971-1975	Reel 5
Membership Lists, 1955-1969	Reel 5
Merit Rating, 1948-1949	Reel 5
Merit Rating, 1952-1964	Reel 5
Photographs, 1978-1979	Reel 5
President's Files, 1942-1946	Reel 5
President's Files, 1945-1949	Reel 5
President's Files, 1950-1955	Reel 5
Salary and Benefits Committee, 1964-1965	Reel 5
Salary Negotiations, 1984	Reel 5
Salary Study Committee, 1973-1974	Reel 5
Schenectady Teachers Association Decertification, 1972	Reel 5
Strike, 1975	Reel 5
Strike--Flyers and Notices, 1975	Reel 5
Strike--Photographs, 1975-1976	Reel 5
Strike--Picket Bulletin, 1975	

Reel 5

Teacher Representation, 1967-1970

Reel 5

Newsletters, 1956-1989Physical Description: 1 Reel**Arrangement**

Arranged chronologically.

Scope and Contents

Includes the general newsletter of SFT and occasional specialized newsletters, bulletins, and flyers. These extras include circa B. News and circa B. Views (1967-68), which announced the activities of the Collective Bargaining Committee. Strike bulletins (1975) are filed in the subject files.

Title/Description	Instances
<i>Federation News</i> , 1956	Reel 5
<i>Federation News</i> , 1957	Reel 5
<i>Federation News</i> , 1958	Reel 5
<i>Federation News</i> , 1959	Reel 5
<i>Federation News</i> , 1960	Reel 5
<i>Federation News</i> , 1962	Reel 5
<i>Federation News</i> , 1963	Reel 5
<i>SFofT News</i> , 1964	Reel 5
<i>SFofT News</i> , 1965	Reel 5
<i>SFofT News</i> , 1966	Reel 5
<i>SFofT News</i> , 1967	Reel 5
<i>SFofT News</i> , 1968	Reel 5
<i>SFofT News</i> , 1969	Reel 5
<i>SFofT News</i> , 1970	Reel 5
<i>SFofT News</i> , 1971	Reel 5
<i>SFT Newsletter</i> , 1972	Reel 6
<i>SFT Newsletter</i> , 1973	Reel 6
<i>SFT Newsletter</i> , 1974	Reel 6
<i>SFT Pipeline</i> , 1974	Reel 6
<i>SFT Pipeline</i> , 1975	Reel 6
<i>SFT Pipeline</i> , 1976	Reel 6

<i>SFT Pipeline, 1977</i>	Reel 6
<i>SFT Pipeline, 1978</i>	Reel 6
<i>SFT Pipeline, 1979</i>	Reel 6
<i>SFT Pipeline, 1980</i>	Reel 6
<i>SFT Pipeline, 1981</i>	Reel 6
<i>SFT Pipeline, 1982</i>	Reel 6
<i>SFT Pipeline, 1983</i>	Reel 6
<i>SFT Pipeline, 1984</i>	Reel 6
<i>SFT Pipeline, 1985</i>	Reel 6
<i>SFT Pipeline, 1986</i>	Reel 6
<i>SFT Pipeline, 1987</i>	Reel 6
<i>SFT Pipeline, 1988</i>	Reel 6
<i>SFT Pipeline, 1989</i>	Reel 6

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