

The March 2010 meeting of the Seminole State College Board of Trustees included an agenda item entitled "Information Concerning Faculty Unionization Effort." Board Chairwoman Lisa Greer opened the meeting by offering interim chapter president Michael Hoover an opportunity to address the board for five minutes (a limit she repeated). Neither the Board nor the college administration had notified the chapter in advance that we would have a chance to speak at the meeting. The inequity of the situation was readily apparent - the Board granted us a few extemporaneous minutes, Seminole State President Dr. E. Ann McGee followed speaking at some length from prepared remarks, and attorney James Crosland of the law firm Bryant Miller Oliver (engaged as "special needs" counsel by the Board at its February 2010 meeting) made a power-point presentation lasting more than an hour.

Several times during the course of her speech (and repeated in a subsequent campus wide e-mail), Dr. McGee referred to the union as a "third party" on campus. In reality, attorney Crosland was the only third party in the room and on campus. How can we be a third party? We're home grown and hand sewn. We teach and work here, interacting with students everyday, making a positive impact by helping them to improve their lives and make good on their opportunities. We are the union and the union is us. In contrast, Attorney Crosland is a hired gun brought in to intimidate, foster dissension, and wear people down. The Board had to pass a special resolution justifying expenditures for Mr. Crosland's law firm (Bryant Miller Olive) because the firm's fees exceed the maximum per hour charge permitted by the state of Florida. How much money did he cost the college on Friday? How much will he cost the college in the future?

We have been consistent in saying that we believe in collaborative relations. We realize that disagreements will arise; after all, they exist now. Such differences, however, do not preclude recognition of mutual interests and operation on the basis of mutual respect. Ultimately, administration and the Board will set the tone of relations attorney Crosland's presentation was evidence of a combative, confrontational, disrespectful and divisive environment. Anytime someone repeatedly says "this is not a threat", you can be assured of a threat.

While the Board placed this item on its agenda as "Information Concerning Faculty Unionization Effort", each member felt compelled to express anti-union opposition. They were unable to maintain even a facade of objectivity and open-mindedness. Of course, an informed and educated decision may not be in the cards given that board members are politically partisan patronage appointees of the state governor.