



## SUPPLEMENT

### EMPLOYEE MEETING HELD NOVEMBER 22



*Station Director, Dr. Jim Hunter*

#### • **Benefit Changes**

The new rates for the Empire 1991 Plan are: Individual biweekly will be \$8.08; family will be \$33.15. The 1992 deductible under Metropolitan Major Medical will be \$175.00 per person per year with a maximum of three deductibles per family. Once the deductible for an individual is met the maximum out-of-pocket expense will be \$776.00 (of reasonable and customary charges.)

The new rates of Blue Choice (HMO) 1992 Plan are: Individual biweekly will be \$5.40; family will be \$26.37. Please refer to the New York State Health Insurance Program 1992 Profiles booklet for information on the programs. The open transfer period to change health insurance coverage has been extended to December 24, 1991. The deadline to submit select benefits forms has been extended to December 16, 1991.

Information on Long Term Disability (LTD) will be sent to eligible employees soon. Mary Slaght will be available in Geneva in the near future and will discuss this option with eligible employees.

#### • **Reclassification Study**

The classification review study is progressing. A series of articles will be printed in the *Cornell Chronicle* informing employees of the progress being made.

#### • **Budget**

Director Hunter stated that at this time we have no specific information about the status of the state budget other than what employees have read in the media.

The Director said he sent a memorandum to department chairs and unit leaders about three weeks ago stating what was known then. He indicated that he had been asked to formulate a plan as to how the Station would deal with a two per cent cut in our state budget. If implemented, that would mean a reduction of from \$180,000 to \$200,000 depending upon what is exempt from the cut.

“We anticipated at least a two per cent shortfall for this year,” said the Director, “and when we made allocations to departments and units, we held enough in reserve to accomplish such a cut. We can, therefore, handle a two per cent cut without layoffs. Part of being able to do

this, though, involves a continuation of our energy-saving procedures that we instituted last year such as wearing extra clothing if necessary, shutting down operation of some greenhouses, etc. If, on the other hand, we are looking at a four per cent cut, as the media has indicated might be a possibility, it could be painful," commented Director Hunter.

Director Hunter went on to say that because of the current budget situation, he would not, support requests for reclassification or in-grade salary adjustments unless there are extraordinary mitigating circumstances. This policy will be reviewed when more definitive information is available on the budget.

It was also indicated that there is a University-wide freeze on hiring at this time. It applies to all sources of funds. This freeze is instituted annually at about this time of the year and is usually lifted sometime after the winter holiday break.

So far as to whether employees will have to go on furlough for a number of days or have some loss of pay this fiscal year, Director Hunter commented that "we just don't know anymore than you do, and what we do know has come via the media." However, he pointed out that principal individuals who work with implementing these matters are concerned if such a program should be instituted, and not spread over more than one pay period. Still, at this time, nothing is known.

"I have greater concern for next year's budget than for this year's," said the Director. "Again, I know nothing more than what I have read in the paper, but the state is already talking about a \$700-\$800 million shortfall for this year. Next year, some have said it could be as much as five times this year's amount. Tuition increases and other actions might reduce the amount of this deficit that would be passed along to the experiment station"

However, said the Director, the state is talking about going to a multi-year budget which could dampen somewhat next year's projected shortfall. The current state fiscal year is April 1 to March 31. There has been some talk about making the budget year from April 1, 1992 to September 30, 1993, or an 18-month year. This would start the state's fiscal year in 1993 on October 1, or six months into the tax year. The state would have revenues coming in from April 15 until sometime in September before the budget would be passed. "Hopefully, this would enable the state to pass a budget more in line with revenues," said the Director. "This would prevent us from getting through several months of the fiscal year and then having to make drastic budget cuts to make up a shortfall."

The Director also pointed out that New York is not the only state having fiscal problems. He just returned from a national meeting of university

officials and learned that many other states are facing difficult times, some to a greater extent than New York. For example, during the last two years, Massachusetts has lost 28 per cent of its budget for higher education. Connecticut has lost 17 per cent. New York's reduction is 13 per cent. "We're better off than some other states," commented Director Hunter, "and, we start from a higher level of support."

• ***Where the Station gets its money***

The Director reminded everyone that the experiment station does not get its money from a single source. The latest state allocation, before the most recent cuts, amounted to about 58 per cent of our total budget. As a comparison, it was 85 per cent in 1975. Consequently, we have to offset some loss in state money. This means that more individuals and programs are being supported by increasing amounts of non-state dollars generated by the faculty, stated the Director.

Other sources of funding include state contracts such as support for the Feed, Fertilizer, and Lime Laboratory and IPM. Then, there are federal formula funds allocated to the station each year. These dollars amount to a little less than six per cent of our budget compared to approximately nine per cent a few years ago.

Finally, there is a growing number of private grants and contracts. Many of these dollars, pointed out the Director, are not really under his control. They come directly to the faculty member involved with a particular project or into a specific program.

Many times, people have difficulty understanding how the Station can be short of money on the one hand and spending it on the other. "One of the reasons is just what we have said about more and more non-state dollars coming in to fund specific projects of specific people. This is why you might have to lay off an individual over here and be able to hire someone over there. And, unfortunately, some times the individual who has been laid off is not qualified for the position that is opening in another area," said the Director.

The Director went on to say that there may even be times when someone new is hired to do a job that is essential, but which the present staff just does not have the time to do properly. He cited two examples: an additional person in Buildings and Properties and an additional employee hired in central administration in Jordan Hall. Both of these individuals were deemed necessary to enable these offices to get required tasks, such as building and safety inspections, done on time and reports, bills, payments, etc. in the hands of the people that have to have them.

#### • **Construction Projects Under Way**

Some employees have asked, "How is it possible to have so much new construction going on at the Station when we have said these are hard times and there is a shortage of money?"

"Again," said the Director, "these are different sources of money. The State University Construction Fund may be funding projects at the Station right now that were requested 15 to 20 years or more ago. We don't have any control over those dollars. Also, some of the construction, such as the new pesticide facilities at the Fruit and Vegetable Research Farm, are mandated by the state."

*The current list of projects and their status follow:*

- Pesticide Spray Laboratory/Rain Tower (north of Barton Laboratory). Block walls are complete with construction scheduled to be finished in mid-March 1992, weather permitting.
- Pesticide Storage/Spray Platform (Fruit and Vegetable Research Farm). South and east walls are complete and building is scheduled to be finished by the end of May 1992, weather permitting.
- Pesticide-Degradation Soil Tank Structures (Fruit and Vegetable Research Farm). Concrete slabs and grate supports are complete. Completion of this project is delayed pending redesign of greenhouse structures by an out-of-state vendor.
- Pesticide Sprayer Storage/Repair Facility (Fruit and Vegetable Research Farm). Block walls are nearly complete. Building scheduled to be finished by the end of August 1992.

- USDA Plant Introduction Greenhouse (Plant Genetics Resources). Greenhouse structure is complete and heat and electric are being installed now. Structure is scheduled to be finished this month (December).

- Second elevator in Barton Laboratory. Construction is scheduled to start in mid-March 1992 and be completed in October 1992.

- Barton Laboratory Growth Chamber Renovation. Bids are to be advertised on October 15, 1992, bids are to be awarded on December 15, 1992, and construction is to be completed by April 1, 1994.

- Jordan Hall Elevator. Bids were advertised on November 11, 1991, bids will be awarded on February 1, 1992, and the project is to be completed by February 1993.

- Campus-Wide Energy Management System. This project is 80 per cent completed at this time and should be finished by the end of December 1991.

- Raw Products Building Cooling Tower Replacement. This job is 30 per cent complete and will be finished by March 31, 1992.

#### • **What can we do to generate more funds at the Station**

"The faculty is doing about all that

they can to generate more grants and contracts,” stated Director Hunter.

“I have to say that after having several meetings with key individuals in Albany, the message we get is to lie low at this time. We’re part of the SUNY budget and are being funded through that process. However, when it is an appropriate time to ask for additional dollars, we have been working on the right offices to contact in Albany.”

The Director alluded to *The Geneva Plan* which is the basis of an expanded funding program for research and extension activities at the Station. This plan is on hold, but it is being reviewed again, and some individuals have been asked to add a component on management and marketing. The advice from contacts in Albany is not to pursue this until the state’s budgetary problems are resolved.

Further, various committees are active within the College helping to advise the Dean and Directors on what the College should be doing 15 to 20 years from now. Geneva is an important part of that planning processing, said Director Hunter.

• ***What can we do to save money***

Saving energy is going to be very important, reiterated the Director. Helping to do this is an on-line energy management system that is currently being installed throughout the campus. Once this system is fully operational, it should pay for itself within three years. Most of the dollars for this project came from a special allocation from the state.

Another place that savings have occurred is in the size of the vehicle Pool at the Station. A committee was appointed to study the use of vehicles in the Pool, and it was determined that the size of this Pool could be reduced by eight vehicles. This will help enable the Station to maintain a Pool of vehicles that are in the best condition possible and to have most of the vehicles used on a regular basis. Previously, there were many times when several vehicles would sit on the lot not being used and, therefore, not generating any income, but they were rusting out. The vehicle Pool is an enterprise operation which means that rental fees are important to maintain and replace them.

Other ways of saving money are being looked at, said the Director, including possibly using government surplus equipment and supplies to replace certain items such as fork lifts or dump trucks. Perhaps even scientific equipment will become available as military bases are closed, he said.

The Director encouraged employees to make suggestions as to how money can be saved and how more funding can be obtained. All suggestions will be looked at carefully, he said.

• ***Performance Dialogues***

Director Hunter pointed out that someone raised the question of why we need to do performance dialogues if we aren’t going to have raises this year? “I have never thought of this as being the main reason for having a performance dialogue,” said the Director. “I think that it is important that we conduct these dialogues even though I am well aware that they are very stressful for both the supervisor and the person being reviewed. The key to this project is the word, ‘dialogue.’ It should be just that—a dialogue between the supervisor and the employee, including, as indicated in the document that has to be completed, a review of goals for the coming year. These dialogues should be used to get a good understanding between the employee and supervisor and to develop better lines of communication.”

In response to a question about why there were only four levels of performance that could be marked, including “satisfactory” being the highest, Director Hunter said that there was more negative impact when additional categories of “exceptional” and “outstanding” were included. With the present form, he indicated that there is a place in the comments section for the supervisor to write that the employee is exceptional or outstanding.

• ***Early Retirement Program***

In response to a question from the floor, Director Hunter indicated that he was not aware of any official word on the possibility of the state offering an early retirement program. Unofficial indications are that one will be offered, but there have been no details forthcoming so far. ■