

# A Report on Our Contract Negotiations

from Local 100 President John Samuelsen

## Sisters and Brothers:

As we enter the fifth month since the expiration of our contract with the MTA, I want to thank you for your patience and support during this difficult and contentious process. I also want to fill you in on where we are in negotiations, and most important, what we all must do – in unity – to achieve a fair and equitable agreement for transit workers.

At this time last year, it was clear to everyone that this negotiation was going to be a difficult and complex process. The region was in recession. NY State was in the middle of a financial crisis. Gov. Cuomo threatened to lay off thousands if their unions did not agree to major concessions. The State's two largest unions, followed by several smaller ones, accepted contracts with three years of wage freezes, HUGE givebacks in health care and FORCED unpaid furloughs.

We all knew the MTA would try to capitalize on the situation by demanding a similar contract from us. The TWU 100 Executive Board acted decisively by stating in July 2011 that Local 100 would not accept a contract like the one forced down the throats of state workers. At the same time, the Board recognized that rhetoric, no matter how militant, would not win us a good contract. The Board instead approved a multi-pronged strategy that emphasized REBUILDING the membership's capacity to stand up to the MTA, identifying sources of funds for our contract, RETOOLING OUR POLITICAL OPERATION IN ALBANY and building support among NEW YORK CITY'S WORKING COMMUNITIES.

## Here's a brief report :

- Our "MTA Can Pay" AND "Money Thrown Away" campaigns have effectively exposed the waste in real estate dealings, and identified other revenue sources where there is money for the MTA to settle a fair contract. Our position that the MTA Can Pay was validated by esteemed arbitrator George Nicolau in the May 15, 2012 award for the 3,000 members of the ATU in Staten Island and Queens who work for NYC Transit. The award upheld Local 100's assessment that the MTA has the money to pay out fair wage increases to our members.



- Our early alliance with the Occupy Wall Street movement helped shift the political discussion from calls for austerity and worker givebacks to demands that wealthy individuals, banks and corporations pay more to resolve the crisis they created.

- We partnered with community groups and politicians to demand restoration of the service cuts of 2010. Union officers and stewards from the bus divisions in Manhattan, the Bronx and Brooklyn are working diligently to achieve this, with several important successes already. In the process, we are building public support for our contract fight.



President Samuelsen addresses Local 100 members at Lobby Day in Albany.

- The impressive presence of 2,000 TWU members in Albany demanding a fair contract in late March brought our fight to the attention of legislators across the state.

- On May 1, we underscored this success by leading a workers' march from Union Square to 2 Broadway where thousands heard our message of fairness for transit workers.

Despite all these positive accomplishments, we remain far apart in negotiations. The MTA continues to insist on a three-year wage freeze and other givebacks, especially in health care. We have not, and will not retreat from our position that transit workers deserve annual cost of living increases to keep pace with inflation. We also need an upgrade in our horrific dental plan. And we have made it clear that we will not pay for our own raises through givebacks in other areas.



*May 1st rally and march.*

Since January 15, there has been an improvement in the economy. Subway ridership is at its highest in 60 years and tourism is at record highs. In April, the State Legislature fully funded the MTA's Capital program, AND FOR THE FIRST TIME IN SEVERAL YEARS, THE MTA RECEIVED EVERY DIME OF FUNDING IT IS ENTITLED TO FROM THE STATE. These positives underscore our position, and further weaken the MTA's case for a concessionary contract.

Contracts are rarely decided solely at the bargaining table. Events away from the table often prove decisive. In the coming months, we will intensify our efforts to build the pressure on the MTA and the NY State government needed to win a good contract. Your support in that effort is critical. We'll be exposing how Wall Street unscrupulously bleeds the MTA's budget. We'll be building stronger coalitions with riders and community organizations, showing solidarity on the job, and demonstrating in the streets. Join me, and your sisters and brothers from throughout the Local, as we fight to win a good contract and continue to rebuild Local 100.



*Bargaining on a new contract with the MTA at 1700 Broadway.*

