



Published by TWU Local 100

Transport Workers

Summer 2010 • Vol.1 • No.3

BULLETIN



9,000
Unwind at Annual
Local 100 Happening
PAGES 13-15



MTA Fiddling with Future...

TALK ABOUT NERO FIDDLING WHILE ROME BURNS. SHORTLY AFTER THE MTA BOARD APPROVED THE CLOSING of more station booths, the termination of more Station Agents, and a new round of big fare increases, Jay Walder – our own emperor fiddler – flew off to his European retreat in the South of France for three weeks of R&R.

Forget the fact that Walder has the public relations instincts of a stone. The point is he doesn't particularly care what transit workers and riders think of his life-style, and even worse, he doesn't understand what all the fuss is about. That's the real disconnect in our society today. Too many people like the Jay Walders of the world – the extremely wealthy-getting-wealthier class – are making decisions with impunity that are grinding down America's blue-collar middle class.

Corporate earnings are way up. Profits that plummeted in the recession have bounced back. Big business has recovered almost 90 percent of what they lost. But the recession persists on Main Street. American workers still aren't finding decent jobs.

A big part of the problem is that too much wealth goes north to the already wealthy, and too little goes south where it is needed most.

According to Harvard Magazine, 66% of the income growth between 2001 and 2007 went to the top 1% of all Americans.

A 2009 poll revealed that 61% of Americans "always or usually" live paycheck to paycheck, which was up from 49% in 2008 and 43% in 2007.

Thirty-six percent of Americans say that they don't contribute anything to retirement savings.

More than 40 percent of Americans have less than \$10,000 saved up for retirement.

The number of Americans with incomes below the official poverty line rose by about 15% between 2000 and 2006, and by 2008 over 30 million US workers were earning less than \$10 per hour.

For the first time in US history, more than 40 million

Americans are on food stamps, and the US Department of Agriculture projects that number will go up to 43 million Americans in 2011.

The numbers are all going in the wrong direction for working families.

Public sector workers throughout America are being branded as the problem by corporate backed think-tanks aided by well-heeled public relations machines. We are the "new elite" workers, according to them, who are draining resources and forcing higher taxes.

The assault on our jobs and contract is not over. The layoffs are just the beginning as we move toward our next contract fight late next year. The leadership is fighting back. We're building to the struggle ahead. We need you with us.

'Thank you' on Solidarity Fund Vote

Very shortly, our laid off brothers and sisters will begin receiving the benefits of Local 100 generosity and solidarity. I applaud the successful vote establishing the Local 100 Solidarity Fund. It allows us to do something truly substantive for these members by helping them pay for their medical coverage. It demonstrates that transit workers and Local 100 steps up for its own in times of crisis. It also sends a clear message to the MTA, the Mayor and the media that we are a new TWU. Only a strong, united union will win the day in our contract negotiations next year. The successful Solidarity vote is a clear signal that we are well on our way to that goal.



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8-9

The "Iron Horse" Celebrates 100

Retired Local 100 member Pat Della Rocco turned 100 recently. He shared his recollections of a great career with the Bulletin, including the formation of TWU in 1934.



13-15

9,000 at Local 100 Family Day

Local 100 President John Samuels and Secretary Treasurer Izzy Rivera were on hand to welcome members to TWU's annual Family Day celebration. It was held at Six Flags in New Jersey on one of the nicest days of the summer.



12

Unionist from 'Across the Pond' Weighs in for Local 100

Bob Crow, General Secretary of the union that represents London's transit workers, added his voice to those denouncing job and service cuts in New York.



18

Don't Retire Until You Talk to Us

The dedicated staff of the TWU Retiree Association provides a wide array of services to retirees, and to those just thinking about taking the plunge.



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For Laid Off Car Inspector, Solidarity Fund Is a Savior

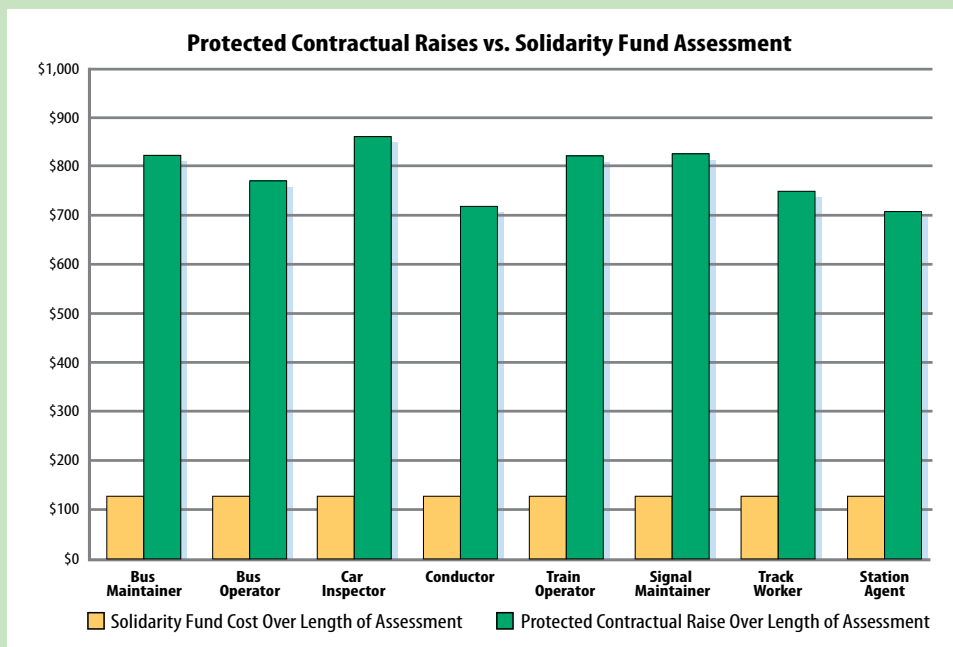
FOR CAR MAINTAINER VINNY NAPOLITANO, one of those to lose his job, the Solidarity Fund is coming in the nick of time. Vinnie has cancer screenings at Sloan Kettering that he would be unable to pay for. He has prescription meds that must be paid for as well.

Vinnie was laid off in August as part of the MTA's retaliation against the union for refusing to open the contract and forfeit future contractual raises.

During the vote, Vinnie had asked members to support the assessment. "There were rumors about layoffs going around, but we never thought they would get rid of Car Inspectors," said Napolitano. "The weekly check I get from unemployment is nothing. I can't support a family on that. The Solidarity Fund would take care of my medical expenses, and give me a shot at stretching out my bills until I get back to work."

Saying "NO" to Givebacks Saved Our Raises, But Resulting Layoffs Made Solidarity Fund Necessary

Over the next few months, your contractual raise of 2% (on Oct. 16, 2010) and 3% (on Jan. 16, 2011) will pay members more than 5 times the \$130 cost of the Solidarity Fund. And it will help hundreds of laid off members like Vinnie Napolitano and their families avoid severe financial distress because of medical expenses they otherwise could not cover.



Members Approve Solidarity Fund To Help Laid-Off Families

LOCAL 100 MEMBERS HAVE APPROVED A \$5.00 PER week (\$10 per pay period) dues assessment to assist laid off members in paying for continuing medical coverage.

The successful vote, which Local 100 President John Samuelsen hailed as “a significant victory in our campaign against the MTA assault on our jobs and contract,” was administered by the American Arbitration Association and counted on Aug. 12, 2010. It passed in five of the seven departments – Stations, MABSTOA, MTA Bus, MOW and RTO – and failed in CED and TA Surface.

The assessment was initially approved at a meeting of the Local 100 Executive Board in July by a unanimous vote of those voting. There were several abstentions.

“It is very important that we act to help these members,” said Samuelsen. “They are victims of our fight with the MTA to preserve our wages and benefits. MTA Chairman Jay Walder retaliated against the union by laying off nearly 1,000

of our brothers and sisters because the leadership and Executive Board refused to cave in to their blackmail scheme to take back our three-percent wage increase due next January, and radically change wages and pensions for new hires.”

Layoffs have hit Stations the hardest, with nearly 500 terminated members. But MABSTOA, TA Surface, CED and Power have taken hard hits as well.

VOTE ON SOLIDARITY FUND BY DIVISION

Division	YES	NO	Total
Local 100/Int'l Staff Members	51	8	59
Car Equipment Division	228	932	1160
MaBSTOA	719	369	1088
Maintenance Of Way	761	591	1352
MTA Bus	101	82	183
Rapid Transit Operations	563	463	1026
Stations	492	315	807
TA Surface	421	525	946
Total	3336	3285	6621

Q&A on Solidarity Fund Special Assessment

The membership – in a secret ballot vote conducted by the American Arbitration Association – approved a special dues assessment of \$10 per pay period to assist our laid-off members in paying for continuing medical coverage. The following are some “Q&A’s” on what’s happening with the assessment.

Q: Who Benefits from the Fund?

A: Good standing members, including provisionals, laid off in 2010 will be the beneficiaries. The monies collected will help these members pay for continuing medical coverage. These benefits are extremely expensive, from \$427 per month for an individual (HIP) to as much as \$1,330 per month for family coverage (GHI with High Option Rider).

Q: How Long Does the Assessment Last?

A: Six months from the pay period that the deductions begin. The bi-weekly assessment will stop being deducted at that time.

Q: When will the deductions begin?

A: As soon as management can start the deductions. We’re in discussions now. Many laid-off members will be losing their coverage by the end of August.

Q: How Will the Solidarity Fund Be Managed?

A: An Executive Board Oversight Committee consisting of Lloyd Archer (TA Surface), Tony Aiken (MaBSTOA) and Derrick Echevarria (Stations) has been established. This oversight commit-

tee will work hand-in-hand with the Secretary-Treasurer’s office and Local 100’s Comptroller and Counsel to manage the fund and resolve problems which may arise.

Q: Will There Be Transparency?

A: Yes. An accounting of all money coming into the fund, and all payments, preserving the confidentiality of the recipients, will be posted on the TWU Local 100 website.

This information will begin to be posted as soon as the union starts receiving monies from the assessment.

Q: What will happen to money remaining in the fund after the six-month assessment period?

A: All of the money in the Fund will be spent on medical insurance. When the assessment ends in six months, there will still be members laid off. Any money in the Fund at that time will go toward medical coverage for members who are still laid off.

Q: Is the assessment tax deductible?

A: The \$10 assessment is part of union dues. If you normally deduct your union dues on your tax returns, the assessment is deductible. Save your pay stubs; these are your receipts.

Q: Do laid-off members have an alternative to COBRA for health coverage?

A: For the majority of laid-off members who do not have coverage through a spouse, COBRA will be the only coverage available.

UNKIND Cuts

By James Gannon

LIKE A “B” MOVIE SLASHER WITH ANGER MANAGEMENT issues, MTA boss Jay Walder hacked away at the City’s public transportation system, leaving nearly 1,000 Local 100 members without jobs and hundreds of thousands of working New Yorkers with severely diminished bus and subway service.

He also set the stage for a future knife fight with Local 100 and other MTA unions with a proclamation that all labor contracts going forward must be “net zero,” meaning the MTA would insist that raises be paid for by hard dollar givebacks.

For the coup de grace, Walder drove a shiv into passengers’ wallets at a July 28th MTA Board meeting with the promise of steeply higher fares. A few days later, Walder jetted off for a three-week vacation to an exclusive area of the Pyrenees in the South of France. He was still at his European retreat when 194 more Station Agents handed in their badges and uniforms on Friday August 13th.

Local 100 President John Samuelsen attacked Walder and his “rubber-stamp MTA Board” as “a bunch of rich guys who have hijacked our transit system.”

Samuelsen, who was one of the first to speak at the July 28th meeting, charged that the MTA Board is made up largely of “rich guys who don’t use the system” and who are “completely out of touch with transit riders and the needs of New York’s working families.”

As Samuelsen and others spoke out against the Walder slice-and-dice plan for the region’s public transportation system, Local 100 members demonstrated on the street below and could be heard clearly in the meet-

ing room chanting, “Fire the MTA,” “Lay Off Walder,” and “Walder Must Go.”

Samuelsen also lashed out at the proposed fare increases and the “net zero” plan for labor contracts as “totally hypocritical” when the Chairman’s multi-year compensation contract exceeds \$3 million. He suggested that MTA bosses give themselves a substantial pay cut before attempting to squeeze more from transit riders and transit workers.

The Local 100 President charged that the MTA is using the current fiscal crisis as a smokescreen to carve open the TWU contract and extract major concessions from transit workers. The MTA demanded the union give up the 3% final-year wage increase of the current contract, as well as a host of other concessions as bounty to stop the layoffs.

The union’s leadership rejected the demands, and instead maintained a full court press in Albany, Washington, D.C. and the courts to find alternatives to job and service reductions.

Sen. Charles Schumer (D-NY) joined Local 100 leaders at a Penn Station press conference recently to promote passage of the Public Transportation Preservation Act of 2010, which would funnel \$2 billion to hard-pressed systems across the country.

The union also lobbied hard for a bill in Albany that would place a moratorium on booth closings until a comprehensive safety study is completed by competent authorities. The bill sailed through the State Senate but stalled in the Assembly prior to adjournment.



Local 100 members demonstrate outside MTA headquarters.



TWU's Iron Horse

Pat Della Roc

**Pat in 1939
getting ready
to work a World's
Fair special.**



MOST PEOPLE JUST READ ABOUT HISTORY. PAT DELLA ROCCO, who turned 100 years old a few months ago, is history.

Pat retired on a union pension in 1976 after 46 years on the job. His first six years from 1930 to 1936 were as a Trolley Operator. He may very well be the only man alive who actually drove the Trolleys in New York before they began disappearing in the 1930's.

Pat also has vivid memories of the earliest days of the union when TWU founder Michael J. Quill would come around to the depots to urge unionization.

"I knew Mike well," Pat told the *TWU Bulletin* during a recent interview at his daughter's



Mike Quill, on his soap box, told Pat and his co-workers, "join the union, be a free man."

home in Rockland County. "He used to stand up on his soap box and tell us 'join the union, be a free man.'" Pat also recalls a stubborn Mike Quill who "wouldn't take 'no' for an answer."

"Some of the men were afraid that the company would fire them if they joined the union," Pat said. "But Mike promised us that that wouldn't happen."

Pat also remembers resistance to the union

Pat, shortly after turning 100, with his daughter Barbara.



co Turns 100

from some drivers. “Some of the workers were company men, ‘apple boys’ we called them. But the pro-union drivers overwhelmed them with our numbers.” When asked why he called the company men “apple boys” he said, “you know, teacher’s pets, the kids who brought apples to the teachers.”

Pat remembers starting the job at 60 cents an hour. But after the union was voted in, he told the *Bulletin*, “we never had it so good.”

“After the union came in, we got real overtime pay and paid vacations and a pension,” recalls Pat. “And all the petty harassment stopped. Before the union, we got written up and suspended for nothing – clothes not pressed, two-day suspension; shoes not shined, two days; ahead of time one minute, two days. The shoe-flies, that’s what we called them, would love to write us up, and tell us, have a nice few days off, without pay of course.”

Pat vividly remembers driving World’s Fair specials (that’s the 1939 World’s Fair) from 105th Street to Queens, “all on overtime thanks to the union.”

World War II interrupted Pat’s driving career. He served in the U.S. Army’s 34th Infantry Division, the Red Bulls, and saw heavy combat in North Africa and Italy. Sadly, Pat’s 2-year old

daughter, Josephine, died in 1945 and he was unable to come home for the funeral. “The War was over in Europe, but they were planning for the invasion of Japan and told me I couldn’t go home,” he recalled with tears in his eyes.

When Pat got back to the States, he

said, no problem, I’ll be there. Nobody could keep up with me.”

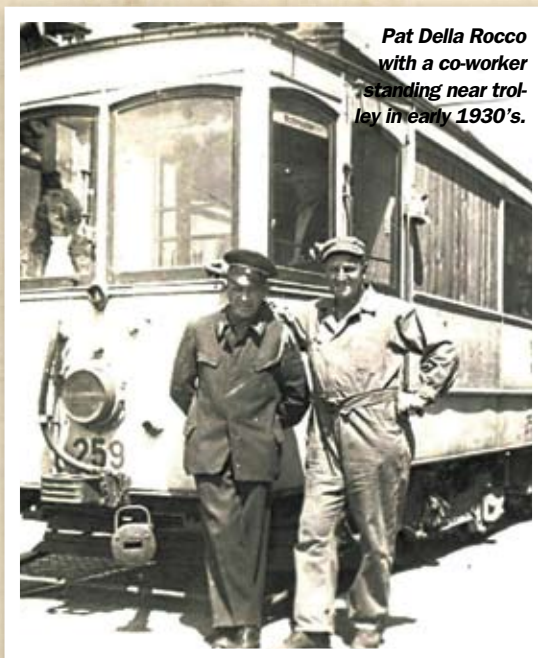
Pat grew up on the Upper East Side where he and his wife of 73 years, Mary, raised their family in an apartment near the Third Avenue El on 116th Street. They moved to Crescent Street in Astoria in 1966 where his daughter, Barbara, remembers the beauty of silence. “Our apartment near the el was really noisy,” she said with a smile.

In years past, celebrities actually rode the transit system. Pat remembers such notables on his bus as New York Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia, Rose Kennedy, the matriarch of the Kennedy family, heavyweight champs Jack Dempsey, Primo Canera and Henry Armstrong. His favorite celebrity bus rider though was fellow Italian American and lightweight champion Tony Canzoneri. “He was a really friendly guy. He would sit right across from me in the first seat and talk away.”

When Pat finally retired, he remembers proudly, “I was number one seniority in my depot.”

Sadly, Pat’s wife passed away in October 2009 and his daughter insisted that he move in with her.

When asked if he could sum up his great career as a bus operator and original member of the union, Pat didn’t hesitate. “I loved my job. I loved to drive. It was fun.”



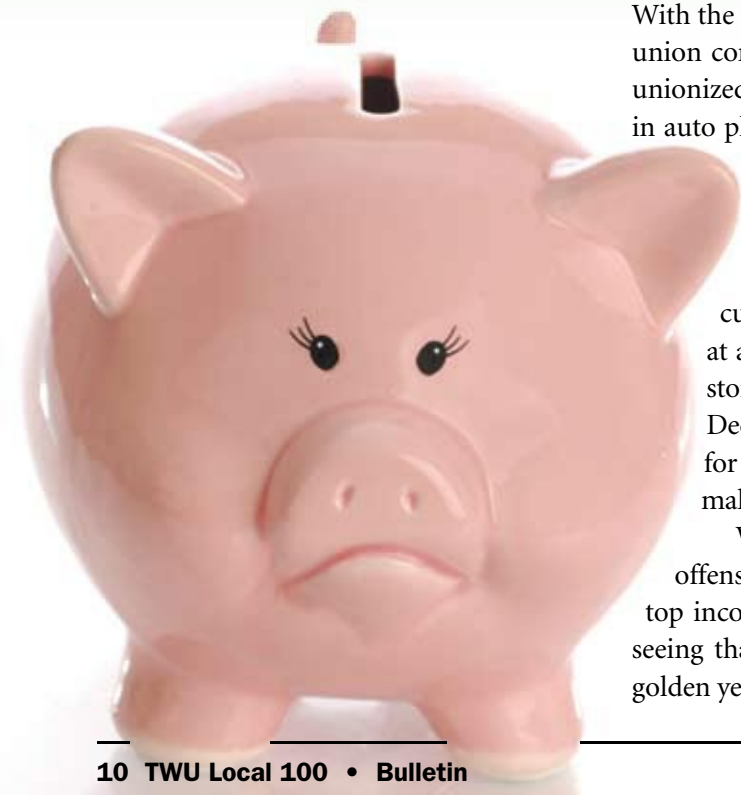
restarted his career driving for the old Omnibus Co. (now MaBSTOA) out of the 100th Street depot.

Pat’s co-workers nicknamed him “the Iron Horse” after the New York Yankees legendary strong man Lou Gehrig. Why? “I never took one sick day in 46 years on the job,” said Pat. “I worked 13 hours every day – a three hour school run in the morning and then a 10-hour regular run. And if the company called me on my day off, I



Assault on Pensions

By David Katzman



PUBLIC EMPLOYEE PENSIONS ARE UNDER ATTACK FROM COAST TO coast. In California and New Jersey, there have been attempts to end enrollment in public pensions and limit new hires to 401(k) plans with lower total value and no guaranteed benefits. In Colorado, the legislature has eliminated COLA for current retirees. Think tanks are flooding the pages of New York newspapers with calls for “pension reform.” They are especially interested in New York, which after California has the largest public pension systems in the country.

The anti-public pension crusade has two main themes. The first is that public pensions are unsustainable and will go bankrupt. The second is that pensions are some kind of special privilege. Both are wrong.

Public pensions are in trouble in places like New Jersey because for many years the State low-balled the pension plans, paying in only a fraction of what was owed. Until recently, pension law permitted state and local governments to get away with this. Now it does not, and those who were cheating have big bills to face up to. But the problems are due to years of cheating, not some essential “unsustainability” of pension plans. This is shown by examples like New York, where the pension plans are not in trouble.

Nor is a pension some special privilege. When an employee takes a job, it is for a total pay package. That package includes the pension. Pensions are wages – payments that are deferred to a later time. Even with pensions factored in, public employees receive lower compensation than their counterparts in the private sector. Without the pensions, the wage package would be much lower.

Posing public pensions as a special privilege is wrong, but it is also possible, because so many people in the private sector no longer get pensions. With the decline of the portion of the private sector workforce covered by union contracts, pensions are threatening to become a memory. Even in unionized sectors, some pensions are disappearing. For example, new hires in auto plants no longer join the pension plan. Instead, they get a 401(k) worth a fraction of the value. Posing public pensions as a special privilege aims at playing off private sector workers against public sector workers.

Why is this campaign intensifying at this time? Years of tax cuts for the wealthy reduced the potential revenues of government at all levels. Now that there is a crisis, there is an urgent need to restore those cuts. The Bush-era cuts in federal taxes are due to expire December 31, 2010 and this helps focus the spotlight on tax breaks for the rich at all levels. What we are seeing is a big con game aimed at making public employee pensions the issue instead of the tax breaks.

When it comes to defending our pensions, the best defense is an offense. The labor movement should insist that all tax breaks for the top income brackets get rolled back. And we should make a priority of seeing that every worker, public or private, has a shot at enjoying their golden years free of the threat of poverty and deprivation.



Banks **MIA** on Loan Modifications

YOUR HOUSE IS GOING INTO FORECLOSURE BECAUSE of a layoff or health crisis – or an unaffordable loan. You want to take advantage of the “Making Home Affordable” loan modification program announced by the White House in February of last year.

That’s the program in which big banks and mortgage companies commit to a “work out” of your loan so you can get better terms. The program is taxpayer funded: so far, the Treasury Department has committed over \$13 billion to 11 loan servicers, including such familiar names as Bank of America and JPMorgan Chase, so they can help borrowers.

But guess what? The banks aren’t exactly jumping into action. According to a report last month from Pro Publica, “about 166,000 homeowners have waited six or more months in plans that only temporarily reduce payments... and for those homeowners who finally do get an answer, it’s usually a denial.”

To take one example, reports say that JPMorgan Chase has “the biggest backlog, with about 46,000 homeowners in limbo.” That parallels the experience of many union members, who spoke out in a July 14 press conference with Comptroller John Liu. They talked about a seemingly endless runaround of phone calls and letters to banks that went nowhere as the bills steadily mounted and foreclosure came closer.

What made this press event more than symbolic was the

presence of TWU Local 100 President John Samuelson, who sits on the board of the New York City Employee’s Retirement System (NYCERS), along with representatives of the two other major unions – DC 37 and Teamsters Local 237. The unions want the banks to do more for struggling homeowners, and are preparing to use their clout with NYCERS.

Samuelson said in part, “Today, TWU Local 100, representing the thirty-eight thousand men and women who run our transit system, has a message for the banks: you must restructure and modify your mortgage loans, following established federal guidelines, so that the workers you took advantage of have an opportunity to keep their houses and stop the foreclosures. Because you profited handsomely, it’s now time to pay back. Local 100, with a seat on the board of the New York City Employees Retirement System, considers this a criterion for our future investment decisions in the stocks of these banks and associated financial institutions.”

At press time, Local 100, in partnership with DC 37, Teamsters Local 237, the Comptroller’s Office, and New York Communities for Change, are considering ways to ratchet up the pressure on big banks – strategies which may include shifting fees paid by NYCERS from those banks to other financial institutions, or even the divestment of portions of the hundreds of millions of dollars in bank stocks and bonds held by NYCERS.

On the day of the press event, the unions sent a letter to Chase, HSBC, Citibank, and Bank of America, urging them to do more for consumers with unaffordable mortgages – many of whom happen to be union members. So far, we have not received a response.



Local 100 President John Samuelson adds the union's support to NYC Comptroller John Liu's initiative to pressure banks on foreclosure modification.

A Clarion Call to Resistance

By Alan Saly

BOB CROW, THE HARD-CHARGING GENERAL SECRETARY OF BRITAIN'S National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers, came to New York for a Local 100 safety conference and ended up demonstrating his anger and resolve against MTA Chairman Jay Walder, an antagonist he has faced before.

In the summer of 2009, Crow led a two-day strike of his members against the London Underground after management reinstated a policy of "compulsory redundancies," which they had agreed to end in the last contract. A compulsory redundancy is a layoff, or workforce reduction driven by privatization or the introduction of new technology.

At the time of the strike, Crow said in part: "RMT has made it clear we expect managers to abide by the existing job security agreements. It wasn't our members who created the downturn and we will not be bullied into accepting that they should be forced to pay for an economic crisis that was cooked up by the bankers."

Here in New York, Crow once



RMT General Secretary Bob Crow (wearing Local 100 t-shirt) joins Local 100 President John Samuelsen (right) outside MTA Headquarters.

again faced off against MTA Chairman Jay Walder, an old foe from Walder's days with Transport for London. Crow joined Local 100 President John Samuelsen in denouncing Walder's current assault on New York's transit workers. "Your plans for Transport for London ended in disaster," said Crow at the MTA Board meeting on July 28. "Riders want to see loads of visible

staff working around the job. They want to see service improvements. But you want to cut services for the most vulnerable," he said.

Crow told the *Bulletin* that Local 100's situation in New York City is "a mirror image of exactly what's been taking place in Britain." This summer, 800 of London's transit workers – mainly ticket agents – are losing their jobs as government downsizes, with many stations going completely unstaffed. That closely parallels the MTA's layoff of some 900 Local 100 members.

Crow, in an exclusive interview with the *New York Daily News*, characterized the attack on public sector workers as "financial fascism," enlarging on his theme of working people paying for the sins of rich speculators. The *News* noted that public sector strikes are not illegal in England, as they are in New York. To that, Crow responded: "Unions were born out of illegality."

Bob Crow on the Record at the Union Hall

Editor's note: These are excerpts from a speech made by RMT General Secretary Bob Crow to the attendees of the Local 100 International Conference on the Health Status of Urban Transit Workers on July 29th.

"My Union, RMT, is exactly similar to the TWU. We're an industrial union, as against a craft union. Our duty is to lift everyone in society, the strong to help the weak, and to raise peoples' standards, and not just in the workplace.

"We give money and physical support to those Members of Parliament who are prepared to roll their sleeves up and fight for working people. But what we're not prepared to do is give money to people who are prepared to mug us down the road.

"The top 10% of rich people in Britain, through the biggest

recession we've had in 70 years, have increased their profits by 70% in that period of time. Who's going to be paying for it? The laid-off station agents, they're going to be paying for it. The workers in the hospitals are paying for it.

"Technology can be a fantastic thing if it means that we all work less, we have more time off, we have more annual leave. The bosses don't want that. They want technology to throw more people onto the unemployment lines so they can build even bigger profits for themselves.

"We stand for independent, democratic, free trade unionism. And where there are workers in struggle, we give them support. We stand for a commitment to a different kind of world that puts the workers first, and workers' needs first, not profit."

TWU Local 100 FAMILY DAY

Tops Expectations!

By Alan Saly



LUCK SMILED ON FAMILY DAY 2010, AS JULY 31 fell on a beautiful sunny day on which this summer's unusually high temperatures moderated a bit. For over 9,000 transit workers and their families, it was an opportunity to kick back and chow down, to ride through the air upside down at over 100 MPH, and to see cute animals and exotic beasts up close.

Of the 102 buses to start from New York to Six Flags Great Adventure in Jackson Township over the river, only one was sidelined due to mechanical problems – and the passengers in that bus were picked up en route by our reserve coach. Chalk it up to tight planning by Local 100's Family Day Committee, backed up by scores of bus captains who solved problems and made sure that the families who played together stayed together for the ride home.

TWU Local 100's tables were set up in the picnic grove, a 15-minute stroll through the rides

Continued on next page



Family Day *Continued from page 13*

and attractions. On reaching the picnic area, marked by three huge pavilions where long tables were piled high with free food and soft drinks, thousands of members could meet and snack between rides. Tables were manned by Local 100's event sponsors, including Central Medical Services of Westrock, the law firms of Brecher Fishman and Fusco, Bradenstein & Rada, and Grey & Grey. CMSW sponsored a dolphin show attended by hundreds of transit families. Many also attended the private tiger show sponsored by the union's Training and Upgrade Fund. These sponsors – along with sponsoring fraternal organizations and labor unions around the City – also contributed ads in the Family Day Journal, helping Local 100 defray costs.

For the members' first turn around the park, many buses took the 30-minute Wild Safari ride, treating kids and adults to sights usually seen only in African game preserves.

Jessica Rivera, the six-year old daughter of Bus Captain and Division Chair Willie Rivera, stared wide-eyed at a huge rhinoceros that almost nuzzled against the bus while other kids marveled at the long-necked giraffes.

Local 100 officers, including President John Samuelsen and Secretary-Treasurer Israel Rivera made it a point to spend time with members and families, as well as acknowledging event sponsors. OA Division Chair Frank Austin took a turn on the park's most fearsome ride, El Toro, and emailed the Bulletin a photo to prove it. While members caught up with family and friends, Local 100 staffers sold union t-shirts at \$5 a pop in one of the food pavilions where a stage was set up and the walls were festooned with TWU Local 100 Division banners.

This year's Family Day brought in a goodly amount of funds to the Union's treasury, money that helped make up for the decision of the previous Local 100 administration to purchase 20,000 Six Flags Great Adventure tickets last year. Unused tickets were held over and used this year, giving many of us a day in the sun at a time when the American economy is going south and many jobs which were once thought completely secure are threatened. Every dollar raised through family day tickets and sponsor commitments means more funding for next year's contract fight and advocacy for mass transit.





Local 100 Members Never on the Sidelines Making Our Presence Felt

Veterans Appreciation Day

Local 100 celebrated its annual Veterans Appreciation Day on May 19 to a full house at the union hall.

Bus Operator Monti Spruill kicked off the ceremony with a beautiful a cappella rendition of the National Anthem, and members of the NYCT Pipe and Drum Band performed patriotic favorites including You're a Grand Old Flag, Halls of Montezuma and The Caissons Go Rolling Along.

Secretary-Treasurer Israel Rivera, a career military soldier with the U.S. Army, said that it was "an honor to serve" with the men and women of the Armed Forces. Recording Secretary Benita Johnson added words of praise for the union's veterans, saying "I applaud you a thousand times over."

U.S. Navy veteran and CED Chair Joe Campbell; Vietnam Veteran Phil Caruanci, the Local's veterans affairs liaison, and Vietnam Vet John Noone from the Retirees Asso-



ciation also addressed the crowd.

Guest speakers included State Sen. Eric Adams, Chair of the Veterans, Homeland Security and Military Affairs Committee, and U.S. Navy vet Lance L. Orton, Sr., the instant hero who "saw something and said something" to police which helped foil the attempted Times Square bombing several months ago.

Photo is a group shot of speakers, guests and attendees at the event.



Huge Turnout at Puerto Rican Day Parade



Scores of Local 100 members, led by President John Samuels, Secretary-Treasurer Israel Rivera, Jr. and Administrative Vice President Angel Giboyeaux, turned out for New York's 53rd annual Puerto Rican Day Parade on

June 13. The parade was blessed with beautiful weather as thousands of New Yorkers showed their Boricua pride amidst a sea of red, white and blue flags. Observers said this was TWU's largest contingent ever for this event.

TWU Celebrates Dia de Los Obreros

More than 300 members and friends helped the union recognize Dia de Los Obreros, Latino Workers Day on June 18. Dia de Los Obreros is an annual event celebrating the many contributions of Latinos and Latinas in the human rights and labor movements. The event took place at the UFT's training center in the Bronx. Attendees were treated to live music, great food and refreshments, Salsa dancers and a Taino Indian heritage troupe. Local 100 President John Samuelson and Secretary Treasurer Israel Rivera, Jr. led the Local 100 contingent.



Local Joins LGBT Pride Parade

TWU pride and a commitment to equal rights for all were on display at this year's LGBT Parade on June 27th. Union members, led by Secretary Treasurer Israel Rivera, Jr., Recording Secretary Benita Johnson and Administrative Vice President Angel Giboyeaux, marched from 52nd Street south to Christopher Street in Greenwich Village. This was the first time Local



100 participated in this annual event. Participants carried signs stating the union's belief in "freedom for all men and women regardless of sexual orientation."

Dominican Day Parade Draws Big Turnout

Local 100 members turned out in good numbers for the 28th annual Dominican Day Parade on August 8. Secretary Treasurer Israel Rivera, Jr. led the TWU group on the mile-long march up the Avenue of the Americas. As always, Local 100 provided its participants with food and refreshments, and showed off Local 100 pride in its connections to the Dominican community with a float and a city bus draped in Dominican flags.



TWU Local 100 Retirees Association: Keeping Our Retirees Connected

When most Americans retire, they're on their own.

But not Local 100 members, thanks to a dedicated group of people who administer the TWU Local 100 Retirees Association.

The Association is currently 9,000 strong and growing steadily under a renewed commitment to its success by Local 100 President John Samuelson, who named two new co-leaders of the Association – John Noone and Mike Tutrone. They work alongside the rest of the Retiree's dedicated staff including benefits expert Norman Rosenfeld, Howard Gaffney, Renee Alford, Shalena Lindsey, Don Gyalsen and volunteer Angelo Camaioni (photo right).

Noone told the *Bulletin* that the Association, first and foremost, provides a strong support system for retirees. "We're here to help in any way we can, and not only current retirees, but also members thinking about retiring next month or next year or five years from now."

Noone also said that the Association is building alliances with retiree groups from other city agencies, and is working ever more closely with NYCT Retiree chapters in

other states, including Florida, Georgia, and North and South Carolina.

"We want our retirees to stay active and connected to the union," Noone continued. "And I know our retirees want to stay connected to us. With numbers, we have power. Together, TWU is a stronger, more active union."

For information on the Retirees Association, or any questions related to retirement, pensions, Medicare benefits, and much more, call 212-873-6000, ext. 2160 or 2161.

Noone said that the next Retirees Association general meeting is scheduled for October.



A Call Was All It Took for a Pension 'Jackpot'

At the age of 62, Train Operator Michael Golas was ready to retire. Other members of his family had moved down to the Raleigh, NC area, and Michael and his wife were ready to join them.

Michael enjoyed a rich and varied career before coming into service as a Conductor at the end of 1988. Once in transit he promoted to Train Operator at the next exam, and spent over two decades operating trains on the R and F lines and in Coney Island

Yard. In 2008, Michael was placed on restricted duty, and it took a year of fighting to return to full duty. Michael gives much of the credit for overcoming the obstructions from MAC to Division Chair Steve Downs.

After another year of unrestricted duty, Michael was ready to retire. At age 62 and with more than twenty years on the job, he was entitled to a decent pension plus retiree health care. To make sure he got all that was coming to him, Michael met with Local 100 retirement counselor Norman Rosenfeld.

In reviewing Michael's paperwork, Norman noticed an anomaly. In the course of his varied career, Michael had once put in a year as an unemploy-

ment claims adjuster for the New York State Department of Labor.

The next day, Norman called Michael at home and told him to sit down. "It's a good thing I sat, because after he told me, I would have been on the floor," says Michael. As a former State employee, Michael was entitled to Tier 1 benefits instead of Tier 4. The difference? More than \$14,000 a year for the rest of his life.

Not every retiree can hit the jackpot like Michael did. But no retiree ever lost money or benefits by seeing the Local 100 counselor first, and many have gained.

Thinking about retirement? Call the Retirees Association at 212.873.6000 x2107 and make an appointment with Norman Rosenfeld.



Michael Golas (left) with RTO Vice President Kevin Harrington (center) and retirement counselor Norman Rosenfeld.



Retirees Enjoy Summer Picnic

Beautiful weather greeted several thousand TWU Local 100 retirees, families and friends at the annual Retiree Association Picnic on June 19, 2010 at Holiday Hill in central Connecticut.

There was something for everyone at the event: boating, swimming, bungee jumping, rock climbing, basketball, hay rides, beach volley ball, bingo and more. For the grand kids, there were added treats including pony rides, face painting, balloon making and a juggler. A DJ also provided music for entertainment and dancing. There was plenty of food and refreshments, too, and a raffle to top it all off.

The annual picnic is the largest and most popular social event on the Retirees Association calendar.



Round Ups

BX 39 Service Restored, Thanks to Union Effort

A determined mobilization by OA Bus Operators caught the MTA's attention – and forced restoration of service on the BX 39, serving riders in the Wakefield section of the Bronx. Knowing that the summer service cuts were coming, OA Vice President Brian Clarke and Bronx Division Chair Frank Austin began to mobilize drivers and mechanics with the help of flyers from the Union Hall.

We knew the BX39 – it used to be the BX41, but the MTA changed the route number, probably to confuse the public – would be a good bus to target because it takes a lot of working people to their jobs at area hospitals on the night shift, and that night service was slated to be cut. Operators who live in the community were called to distribute flyers along White Plains Road, at Fordham Plaza, and

at the 149th Street transit hub.

Says Austin: “We blanketed the community in the Wakefield area, and we got a great response.

Bus Op Writing Book

Bus Operator Douglas Weiss is writing a book on the experiences of NYC Operators. If you have an interesting story to share, email **Doug** at bigdoug@warwick.net.

Stations Members Hold ‘Vigil’ for Closed Booth

Stations provided much of the muscle for the union's demonstrations this summer – including stands against removals of token booths throughout the system. On August 12, Shouts of “Fire the MTA!” filled the air as two dozen Local 100 members gathered to protest the 12 Midnight



Vocal crowd protest at 135th St.

closing of the token booth on the northbound IRT stop at 135th Street in Harlem. Riders coming home for the evening were angry, especially because Harlem Hospital, the

community's major source of health care, is just a block away. Local politicians supported TWU Local 100 and came out earlier in the evening. On hand for the booth's final shift were Stations VP Maurice Jenkins, Local 100 Recording Secretary Benita Johnson, Stations Division Chairman Der-

rick Echevarria, and Local 100 rank and file members. They were also joined by representatives of the Bail Out the People movement.

RTO Assaults on Rise

Union officers have sent out a notice to Conductors and Train Operators to be acutely aware of their surroundings as verbal and physical assaults spiked after recent transit cuts

went into effect. Spitting incidents and other assaults like thrown objects, slaps and punches were up after the cuts. Be careful out there.

MOW Officers Raise Crew Quarters Concerns

After a few incidents of people coming into crew quarters who do not belong there, members are urged to check identities before opening the door.

The union asks for help in getting repairs made to quarters: things like checking heaters so we can get repairs made before the cold winter days set in. Also please call with any electrical, plumbing or painting issues.

New MTA Bus Payroll a Mess

The new GEAC payroll system instituted by MTA Bus a couple of months ago resulted in a multitude of problems that union officers have been trying to get fixed since then. Scores of members were shorted; some had money sent to 10-year old accounts instead of current accounts; others had erroneous child support deductions. It has been getting better.



Postcards FROM Hell

THE POSTCARD “FROM” MTA Chairman to New York City Transit riders said, “Greetings from the South of France.”

But for Mr. Walder, they’re more like postcards from hell.

Transit workers, most of them laid-off station agents, handed out 10,000 of the fake postcards depicting the jet-setting MTA chief on a beach in the South of France, where he was vacationing at his 19th-century stone house in St. Antonin Noble Val in the French Pyrenees.

Local 100 President John Samuelson has continuously attacked Walder, who has a 6-year \$3 million contract with the MTA, as “a rich elitist who is completely out of touch with the needs of New York City transit riders.” Samuelson said the postcards are meant to drive home the union’s



Local 100 member hands out “postcards from hell.”

conviction that a new class war exists in America between the extremely

wealthy and a diminishing blue collar middle class.

The event was widely covered in the media.

Walder left on a three-week vacation to France shortly after the MTA Board voted to implement 200 additional layoffs of station agents, and impose hefty fare hikes on straphangers.

Local 100 and CUNY Team Up on Transit Workers' Health

FROM JULY 27 THROUGH JULY 29, TWU LOCAL 100 AND the CUNY Center for the Biology of Natural Systems jointly sponsored an international conference on the health status of urban transit workers. Delegates from seven different countries took part.

The rich and diverse content of the conference revolved around three major themes:

- occupational health and wellness programs for improving worker health,
- evaluating new technology for its health and safety implications for workers and communities; and
- the relationship of workers compensation programs to medical treatment and workers' needs.

Speakers included health experts from academia and from the federal National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, as well as labor representatives engaged in safety and health work.

Labor participants included representatives of ATU and UTU locals in the U.S., as well as the TWU, and international delegates from Australia, Brazil, Greece, Portugal, the UK and Venezuela.

Occupational Health and Wellness Programs

Workers, pointed out Dr. Max Lum of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, are "the center of medical/scientific occupational safety and health." Occupational health and wellness programs can contribute to their health. Work-related occupational disease and illness prevention is a primary focus of NIOSH; but, personal health promotion ("Wellness") programs are also crucial to a worker's well being.

Recently, NIOSH was prepared to fund such a study of the health issues of transit workers in NYC. Unfortunately, the study did not take place, because the MTA refused to cooperate.

Transportation Technology

Professor Elliott Sclar, director of the Center for Sustainable Urban Development, highlighted the social and

economic importance of access, and of the mobility that mass transit provides for creating access. Measures that undermine mass transportation also undermine access, as well as having demonstrable consequences for the environment and public health.

At the same time, the health and safety consequences of new technology require examination. Examples discussed included communications based train control (CBTC) and nanomaterials, which are being rapidly introduced in transportation and other industries.



Participants broke off into work groups, like this one, to focus on main topics.

Workers' Compensation

Dr. Eckhardt Johanning presented a study of the German system. Unlike that in the U.S., the German system is a national system that tilts less against the injured worker than do systems like that in New York. Under systems like the German one, (for example, in the State of Washington,) not only are injured workers treated fairly, but the data generated by the system can be used toward great efforts at prevention. Detailed discussion considered, among other things, the relationship between disability insurance and providing health services.

Health, Safety and Class Solidarity

Bob Crow of the RMT in Britain capped the conference by considering the relationship of health and safety to class solidarity, and to the meaning of labor and medical/scientific solidarity in the present era.

The conference was a marked success, and attendees discussed the possibility for continued conferences in the future.

In Memoriam

W E M O U R N O U R L O S S

Local 100 mourns the passing of the following Active and Retired members.

Pauline Douet
Active Station Agent
on April 16, 2010.

Aaron Rodin
Retired Conductor
on May 19, 2010

Claretta Lyons
Retired TA Maintainer
on March 4, 2010.

Mathew Varughese
Retired Stock Clerk
on May 3, 2010.

Robert Wong
Active MABSTOA Bus Operator
on May 21, 2010.

Alexander Shoikhetbrod
Active Car Inspector
on May 27, 2010.

David M Townsend
Active Cleaner TA
on May 25, 2010.

Robert L. Bridgman
Retired Train Operator "B"
on May 30, 2010.

Thomas McNamara
Retired TA Bus Operator
on Jan. 21, 2010.

Clyde Brathwaite
Retired Train Operator
on April 26, 2010.

David M. Townsend
Retired Car Cleaner
on May 25, 2010.

Jayson R. Hilton
Active TA Bus Operator
on May 21, 2010.

Marvin Robinson
Retired MABSTOA
Bus Operator
on May 24, 2010.

Naum Roshko
Active Car Inspector
on June 5, 2010.

Henry B. Spies, III
Active LES Maintainer
on June 14, 2010.

Danny Hall
Retired TA Bus Operator
on June 9, 2010.

Richard D. Holloman
Active Cleaner TA
on June 22, 2010.

Patrick Foley
Retired Signal Maintainer
on June 4, 2010.

Andre Padilla
Active Road Car Inspector
in June 2010.

Willie Rosendary
Retired Cleaner TA
in June 2010.

Delano Williams
Active Conductor B
on June 29, 2010.

Howard Lewis
Active Train Operator
on June 26, 2010.

Harry Rushford
Retired Station Agent
on June 12, 2010.

Bahif Muhammad
Active Structure Maintainer
on June 3, 2010.

Arthur B. Richard
Retired TA Bus Operator
on June 24, 2010.

Ralph Polk
Retired MABSTOA
Property Protection Agent
on June 12, 2010.

Russell Doucette
Active Station Agent
on May 12, 2010

Michael Silver
Active Station Agent
on July 8, 2010.

John Duffy
Structure Maintainer 'D'
on July 9, 2010

Ilya Nayman
Active Power
Distribution Maintainer
on July 15, 2010.

Edward Drew
Retired MABSTOA
Bus Operator
on July 1, 2010.

Carlton C. Kellam
Retired TA Bus Inspector
on July 2, 2010.

Alfred S. Brock
Retired MABSTOA Mechanic
on April 28, 2010.

Paul J. Bimbiras
Active Track Worker
on July 26, 2010.

Francis Boyer
Active Conductor
on July 23, 2010.

James G. Colletta
TA Bus Operator
on July 24, 2010.

Gertrude Gavers
Retired Station Agent
on July 18, 2010.

Gary Huber
Retired TA
Bus Maintainer
on August 9, 2010

Thomas D. Brennan
Retired MABSTOA
Bus Operator
on July 5, 2010

Carmen Lajara
Active Cleaner TA
on August 2010

Richard Sharp
Retired Power
Distribution
Maintainer
on July 31, 2010

Valeriy Magdyuk
Active Structure
Maintainer D
August 2010

George B. Simpson
Retired Track Worker
on August 10, 2010



Walking Towards a Cure 10.17.10

TWU Local 100 will be participating in a cancer walk on October 17, 2010. We urge our members, friends and families to participate by signing up at www.twulocal100.org. There are three mustering locations for the walk, including

- Brooklyn, Prospect Park at the 9th Street Bandshell (10:00 A.M. registration; walk begins at 11:00)
- Manhattan, Central Park at the 72nd Street

Bandshell (9:00 A.M. registration, walk starts at 9:30).

- Westchester, Manhattanville College, 2900 Purchase St., Purchase, NY (Registration 8:00 to 10:00 A.M., walk begins at 10).

For more information on TWU's participation, please contact **Oneshia Portlette**, Family Assistance and Women's Issues, at **212.873.6000 ext. 2068**, or email her at **oportlette@twulocal100.org**.

Employers Seeking a New Underclass of Worker

By David Katzman

IF YOU HIRED ONTO THE ASSEMBLY LINE OF A BIG 3 auto company a few years ago, you could be making \$28 an hour today – in the same general ballpark as most transit workers. But if you hired on since the last auto contract was inked, you may be making half that.

When would you catch up? Under present terms, never. Concessions in auto have created a permanent low wage tier. There is a progression, but the gap with the higher tier never closes. Over the years, this lower wage tier will eventually become the only wage tier.

You don't have to go far from the Big 3 to find other examples of wage cutting. At Delphi, the country's biggest auto parts maker, workers already took a cut from \$28 an hour to \$18 –not just for new hires, but for the entire labor force.

Now the company is trying to knock it down to \$12.

Employers such as Delphi are using the present economic crisis to seek concessions that would create a large labor pool with permanently reduced wages and benefits.

Pension implosion

One area for concession hunting is pensions. In 2007, the Big 3 auto companies ended defined benefit pensions for new hires. Instead, new hires get individual 401(k) savings plans, which are likely to yield significantly less at retirement.

This echoes what is taking place at large nonunion employers. Companies such as 3M and IBM have replaced defined benefit pension plans with 401(k)'s, which lack guaranteed benefits. A generation ago, active private sector employees covered by defined benefit plans outnumbered those in other plans by a two to one margin. Now they are outnumbered by about the same margin.

Challenge for labor

Over the past generation, while industries like auto have declined, most job growth has been in nonunionized, low wage sectors and in sectors where much of the workforce are treated like contractors who have to provide their own health insurance, their own retirement savings, etc.

This is not just a problem for the tens of millions of people who find themselves in those conditions. It also puts pressure on the wages and benefits of everyone else.

Today, while the labor movement looks for ways to stop the hemorrhaging in key industries, it also has to find ways to organize some of these unorganized sectors – today, 90% of the work force – and win improvements for as many as possible. This is essential for maintaining the wages and benefits of the 10% who remain in unions today.

What it means for us

Employers in many sectors are responding to these trends, using them to put pressure on the wages and conditions of workers. Our own employer is among them. In June, the MTA floated a series of concessionary demands in the press. One was for the introduction of Tier V pension for new hires, with 57/30 instead of 55/25. Another was to extend the time it takes new hires to reach full pay from three years to five years.

These measures move in the direction of creating a labor pool with inferior terms of work. How much money would these concessions save the MTA in the current budget crunch? Not a dime. How many jobs could they save us? Not a single job. These demands are about long-term structural change, change that would divide transit workers for a generation to come. To save jobs and ameliorate the funding crisis, we are going to have to look in other directions.

GM Building \$250 Million Plant in China

General Motors, a recipient of billions in government bailout money two years ago, is doing much better these days. So well in fact, the company is building a new \$250 million advanced technology center to develop batteries and other alternative energy sources. Unfortunately, the re-

cipient of this corporate largesse isn't Detroit, where workers have taken tremendous hits to employment and their contracts, but China.

In fact, GM now employs 32,000 hourly workers in China, and only 52,000 in the U.S., which is down from 468,000 in 1970.



Employment “At Will” And Why Your Union Contract is So Important

MOST WORKERS WHEN FIRED ARE SURPRISED TO FIND OUT THAT THEY HAVE FEW RIGHTS UNDER THE LAW. THEY think workers in America have rights, that employers are legally required to treat them fairly and that they cannot be fired without a proper cause.

Over the 25 years I have practiced labor law I have heard countless stories from workers about being treated unfairly by the boss or being fired without having done anything wrong.

When they call I explain that the basic law covering the employer-employee relationship is the “employment at will” doctrine.

The doctrine presumes the employment relationship to be “at will,” which means it can be terminated by either party, at any time and for any reason. Under the employment at will doctrine, an employee can be fired for a good reason, a bad reason, or even for no reason at all. Unless the discharge violates a statute or a contract there is nothing a lawyer can do for the employee.

While the law prohibits an employer from discriminating against an employee for many reasons, like the employee’s race, religion, gender, age, or national origin, the law does not prohibit a boss from firing a worker simply for not liking him. And that means workers get fired all the time for reasons that are unfair.

Some people, mostly high ranking executives, are fortunate to have a legally binding contract of employment with their employer.

In return for obligating themselves to work for the company for a number of years, the employer’s right to fire the executive is limited usually to having proper



**Larry Cary, TWU Local 100
General Counsel**

cause. A termination without proper cause usually means the executive gets paid a significant severance that can be as large as the salary he would have earned during the remaining years of the contract.

MTA Chairman Jay Walder, for instance, has a six-year contract with the Metropolitan Transportation Authority with a hefty golden parachute should he be terminated “without cause.”

The only downside for the executive, if it can even be categorized in that manner, for not being easily fired, is that he can’t easily quit his job and usually must work for the full term of his contract. If he quits early, he can be sued by the employer.

Most union members don’t realize that legally the most important part of their collective bargaining agreement is the clause that requires the employer to have “cause” for discharging an employee. This eliminates the employer’s freedom to fire employees under the “employment at will” doctrine. But unlike a contract of employment, the union contract also leaves the employee free to quit his job at any time. In other words, union workers have the best of both worlds. Backed up by binding arbitration, union workers have job security because they can work without fear of being unfairly fired. That can’t be said by the 90 percent of workers in America who don’t have a union.

Kent Avenue Sit Dow

ON JANUARY 25, 1937 A GUTSY GROUP OF 350 BROOKLYN powerhouse workers sat down and thousands of transit workers across New York stood up.

The Kent Avenue Sit-Down Strike lasted less than two days, but it proved to be a seminal moment in the history of a young and struggling TWU. According to John Santo, one of TWU's key early figures, the powerhouse sit-down "electrified the entire industry and changed the whole picture."

In 1937, the Kent Avenue powerhouse, a BMT-owned and operated facility, was one of the few hotbeds of TWU activity among BMT workers. Organizers had made big



strides in signing up IRT employees, but not so among their BMT counterparts. Another early TWU activist, Peter MacLaclan, said some years later that coaxing BMT workers to sign union cards was "like pulling teeth."

On January 23, 1937 – a Saturday – BMT bosses, who were used to having their way, made a blunder that would cost them dearly. They fired two union activists at the plant, claiming they had left their posts unattended.

TWU's founding President Michael J. Quill and top organizer Douglas MacMahon, who would later serve as Secretary Treasurer of the International Union, seized the moment claiming that the workers had been fired for their union leanings.

TWU held an emergency meeting of the plant's activists, who voted to conduct a sit-down strike on the following Monday afternoon if the fired workers had not been reinstated.

TWU's MacMahon met with the President of the BMT,

The August 1937 edition of the TWU Bulletin proclaimed the union's election victory among BMT workers.



n Powers TWU in BMT



Boxes of food are handed up to TWU sit-down strikers at the Kent Avenue powerhouse.

W.S. Mendon, on Monday morning to mediate the crisis, but Mendon refused to budge. So on Monday afternoon at 3:00 P.M. the day shift refused to leave the plant, and the incoming evening shift joined them in locking down the plant.

For two tense days, the entire City of New York watched as the sit-down strikers remained barricaded in the plant threatening to shut power to the BMT system. Outside ever growing crowds of transit workers formed picket lines around the building even as police and company hired goons appeared poised to take over the building by force.

In the end, the company finally backed down and rehired the fired workers. It was a tremendous victory for TWU. Peter MacLaclan recalled that the strike emboldened BMT workers to stand up for unionization. "It was the beginning of the union," he said.

The Kent Avenue win launched TWU to a total election victory among more than 9,000 BMT workers six months later.

Sit-downs a powerful '30s weapon

In historical perspective, the Kent Avenue sit-down strike, while widely viewed locally for its importance to the future success of TWU, was overshadowed nationally by possibly the most famous sit-down strike of that era – the

Flint, Michigan sit-down. That 44-day marathon strike was being conducted at the same time as the Kent Avenue event by the United Auto Workers Union. The Flint sit-down, complete with historic battles between workers using fire hoses on invading police, boosted the UAW from an organization of 30,000 loosely organized workers to the most powerful force in the union movement at the time with 500,000 members.

Prior to the 1930's, most strikes were conducted in the traditional manner. The strikers erected picket lines outside the plant and refused to work. But this model invited scabs and more often than not the strikers were eventually defeated. As with numerous transit strikes in New York in the early 20th century, workers would return to their jobs with lowered heads and union activists fired and blackballed from the industry.

But in 1933, workers at the Hormel Packing Company in Austin, Minnesota tried something different. Instead of leaving the plant, they took it over, locking the doors and refusing to leave.

This new tactic in the United States enabled a small number of workers to stop the production of an entire company by taking physical possession of the plant and its machines. Sit-down strikes brought production to a total and immediate halt and eliminated the use of scab workers to break the strike.

Acknowledgments: "In Transit," by Josh Freeman; Walter Reuther Library at Wayne State University; TWU Express 1937.



Wyndham Mortimer, Vice President of UAW, shakes hands with Sit Down Strike leader, Bud Simons at the window of a closed General Motors plant, Flint, MI, 1937.

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