



Racist Bankers' Profits Breed Cuts in NYC Transit Jobs, Services

NEW YORK CITY, August — "Fire the MTA!" chanted more than 70 angry TWU (Transport Workers Union) Local 100 members as they walked out of a Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) hearing on station agent layoffs, nearly clearing the auditorium on July 13th. This action showed strong multi-racial unity and workers' power. Meanwhile, TWU Local 100 President John Samuelsen and a TWU Division Vice-President Tony Utano silently stood behind the workers. The next day at a second round of MTA public hearings dozens of workers again defied the bosses' cops and loudly disrupted proceedings.

Militant workers ready to break rules and unite with working-class students and riders are on the right track. But Local 100's top officers — who promised more confrontation against the MTA bosses during their union election campaign last year — want to sucker workers into supporting politicians that sponsor a federal bill for emergency transit funding.

Samuelsen publicly told the MTA board on July 13th: "you still have time to make the right decision" and fill the \$800 million budget gap with federal stimulus dollars. However, the scumbags that Local 100 leaders trust to make the right decisions caused the MTA budget gap in the first place. They are determined to balance the budget on workers' backs but not just because of greed, mismanagement or corruption — because of capitalism.

MTA Cuts = Racist Attack

Transit workers are facing the worst attacks in the memory of many veteran workers. The MTA has announced plans to lay off some 3,000 transit workers following an onslaught of attacks from transit bosses:

- Every day the boss' media smear transit workers as greedy or lazy.
- New monthly metrocards could limit the number of trips and cost \$100, up from \$89.
- All fares are scheduled to go up 7.5%.
- In June the MTA cut two subway and dozens of bus lines, greatly reducing service.
- That same month the MTA sent subway Tower Operators letters warning of possible layoffs.

These attacks are racist because they are concentrated on the mainly black, Latin and immigrant transit workers and riders of New York City. In contrast, Mayor Bloomberg guaranteed that there would be no layoffs this fiscal year for cops, who defend the capitalists' rule of society.

The MTA — Wall Street's ATM

The root of the problem is the capitalist system that drives bosses to kill and exploit for profits. Rivalry between imperialists — the most powerful capitalist countries — forces bosses globally to exploit "their" own workers even more. In NYC this competition drives banks and MTA bosses to squeeze nearly one-fourth of the MTA's budget for "debt service," profits paid to wealthy bondholders. This amounts to \$2 billion in interest per year. The bosses' dictatorship guarantees that all these payments are legal requirements under New York State law. Legally, the MTA must pay bondholders before all other expenses and MTA agreements require that fares be sufficient "to cover all debt service" (mta.info).

The MTA's new Chief Financial Officer is none other than the ex-Bear Sterns banker, Robert Foran. He helped create the MTA's current budget "gap" when he engineered a deal to more than double the MTA's debt in 2000 ("Private Promoter for Public Debt," New York Times 5/1/2000). Executives at the MTA also created a new \$217,000-a-year position to cut costs, mainly by laying off workers!

Dump Mis-Leaders, Organize Mass Class Struggle For Communism

The capitalist system that creates racist unemployment will continue until the working class overthrows it and builds a communist society free of racist class exploitation. Every struggle for gains under capitalism — including the fight against fare hikes and job and service cuts — is an opportunity to unite workers, students and the unemployed into a mass fighting communist movement here and worldwide. This is needed to win workers' power.

But fighting the racist bosses means rank-

and-file transit workers must break away from the mis-leadership of Local 100 officers. A Local 100 rally on May 4th was the last time the top leadership organized for, or appeared at, a local-wide action. That day more than 1,000 angry transit workers broke away from a union rally and police barricades and marched to MTA headquarters. That same evening a judge delayed station agent layoffs, until the MTA held public hearings.

Instead of organizing more actions among all 30,000 members of Local 100, they choose to rub elbows with politicians at press conferences and call small actions, dividing and demoralizing transit workers. The lack of consistent mass action promotes a wait-and-see attitude. It also encourages the idea that union benefits are individual entitlements purchased through union dues and friends in high places.

Historically, Workers Have Won All Gains Through United Mass Militant Class Struggle

It was a 1937 Brooklyn sit-down strike of 150 transit electrical power workers — grieving the firing of two of their co-workers — that won the TWU union recognition in New York City. Three system-wide strikes in 1966, 1980 and 2005 and several smaller strikes, many illegal, have maintained relatively high job security, wages and benefits for transit workers. Violent anti-racist rebellions of the 1960s and '70s impelled U.S. bosses to open hundreds of thousands of jobs to black and Latino workers, including New York City transit. This is the history that the union bosses fear and that PLP draws inspiration from.

Today's layoffs show that the bosses' grip over state power can reverse workers' gains. But mass pickets, rallies, sit-downs, physical confrontations with the boss and strikes all make a difference, even if they fail. With an anti-racist communist outlook, mass militant action can help unite workers, students and the unemployed into a mass PLP that will eventually smash the bosses' racist capitalist system and produce a communist world that provides for the needs of the working class. ☸

Profit-thirsty Rulers Break Their Own Laws Battling the Bosses at D.C. Metro

WASHINGTON, D.C. August 3 — The ATU (Amalgamated Transit Union) Local 689 leadership of the D.C. transit workers failed to seriously fight for a decent contract this year, not even trying to seriously mobilize any action or strike against the bosses. Instead, the sellout union mis-leaders allowed the contract to go to arbitration with the cross-your-fingers hope that "it wouldn't be terrible." The arbitrators' award included many give-backs.

But the Metro bosses, sensing the weakness of the union honchos, actually went to court to reverse the arbitration award as "too generous" to the workers and "out of line" with the local government's ability to pay. The Court accepted this ridiculous union-busting argument and ordered the arbitrators to revise their award, using the points advanced by the Metro bosses!

Actually, the bosses' own laws stipulate when the two sides agree to arbitration, they supposedly agree to abide by the arbitrators' decision. But when this interferes with profits, the bosses then break their own law by taking the arbitrators' award to court,

still another example of a bosses' dictatorship.

This week, workers are mobilizing after their union meeting to plan an action at the Federal Court in Greenbelt, Md., where, on August 10, the judge will hear the final arguments on the union's challenge.

Instead of waiting for the other shoe to drop, we need to put on our marching shoes and challenge the bosses and their racist attacks on the predominantly black Metro workers and, by extension, all workers in the region.

All this demonstrates yet again that we live under a bosses' dictatorship. They can pretty it up all they want with "process," "rights" and "appeals," but when it comes right down to it, the government does what the rich bosses need to have done for them to make profits off our labor. We can only rely on ourselves to fight the bosses, and ultimately on ourselves to run the world for our class by organizing revolution, eliminating the bosses altogether, and establishing communism worldwide! ☸



'With a Smile on Your Face and a Knife at Our Throats...'

SF Bay Area Boss-Union Gang-up Wrecks Hard-won Gains

The war is on at San Francisco Bay Area Transit and drivers are gearing up to fight back. PL'ers are involved in the day-to-day and long-range ideological battle for the working class to understand capitalism and how to overthrow it.

AC Transit drivers confronted the "liberal" AC Transit Governing Board which had allowed management to IMPOSE a contract. They explained how imposed schedules leave drivers scrambling with work hours that disrupt their lives. Shifts are all over the map: 6am to 7pm one day, 12pm to 12am the next, with only 8 hours pay. This is unheard of in the transit industry. Drivers with vision problems due to diabetes work night shifts. Parents' shifts prevent them from being able to pick up their children from childcare.

A PL'er said, "The transit service disruption is caused by the cuts you unilaterally imposed with the new contract. You've cut the extra board by 40% at my division — that's your sickout. You're lying and you know you're lying. Not one of you has the courage to tell the truth.... Really you are social fascists — with a smile on your face and a knife at our throats. But the working class will soon rise up and fight back and win the war."

AC Transit is one of the few remaining unionized jobs in Oakland where black and Latino workers can achieve a standard of living above subsistence. There is growing anger over these attacks as well as over the corporate media's lies to convince riders to blame transit workers for service cuts.

On the other side of the Bay, San Francisco MTA has unilaterally imposed new work rules and an absentee policy which directly violates the contract and breaks all existing laws about "meet and confer." PLP'ers and rank-and-file drivers are organizing to defy the MTA and the Transit Workers Union (TWU) leadership. They have done this twice before, when they voted

down a concession-reopener contract recommended by the union leadership.

Drivers understand that the time of so-called "labor peace" that the TWU leadership

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has delivered since 1976 is coming to an end as expectations of "fairness" on the job are destroyed. Many are talking "Strike" and "shut it down." It will take organization and mass education of the membership to put such a plan into action.

The TWU leadership held a "democratic" vote to approve \$16 million in contract concessions, then launched a vicious campaign against the opposition forces. They suspended and brought charges against the only Executive Board member who opposed the contract. They are collaborating with management to discipline drivers with unsubstantiated and undocumented charges.

The union leadership has sabotaged every move to stop service cuts, to unite with the riding public, to educate the membership and even demand enforcement of existing contract "guarantees" like the right to use sick leave. Our comrade's description of the union leaders and Governing Transit Boards as "social fascists" is a new word to many of our coworkers. The reality of unilaterally-imposed contracts, shifts and work rules is giving it meaning. Workers are told union leaders

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are supposed to fight for us and our needs, but they work hand-in-fist with the bosses to enforce their fascist rule over the working class.

On both sides of the Bay the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) and TWU leaders are selling the agenda of the banks and the big corporations. These union leaders publicly attacked MUNI drivers for refusing to "share the pain." They joined the gang-up of the whole ruling class in SF in determining MUNI wages. From the Central Labor Council to the TWU-ATU leadership their plan is to attack any drivers who oppose the plan to "bail out" the city budget.

At the same time, the liberal democrats and so called "progressives" in city government are attacking city-worker pensions, health benefits, and wages as the cause of the deficit and whining that only "city union sacrifice" can balance the budget. In San Francisco, the Mayor congratulated the Central Labor Council leaders on sacrificing \$250 million in worker give-backs.

PLP members are discussing how a so-called "democracy" where workers appear to have "rights" guaranteed by the contract or the law can turn quickly into a direct police-state-like attack when the ruling class, those who own the means of production, needs to squeeze more out of the working class — those who must sell their labor to live. More drivers are seeing for themselves the naked hand of dictatorship behind the appearance of capitalist democracy.

PLP members realize that this is a small step for our coworkers on the road to building a communist way to organize society.

PL'ers must be in the day-to-day struggle with them, to explain concretely why capitalism does not work and that the world should and can be run by a working class dedicated to equality and sharing. We will fight for a world organized to produce everything for workers' needs instead of bosses' profits. ☪

'Public' Transport and Private Profit

The labor of transportation workers is vital to the functioning of capitalism. Modern capitalists, the people who own the means of production, cannot make profits without the infrastructure of mass transit, shipping, railroads, trucking, airplanes and the highway system. They cannot make profits without a labor force to produce things to sell, to buy things, to process all aspects of making money and to make the economy run smoothly. From the capitalists' perspective, mass transit's main function is to deliver their workforce.

Transit workers are in an important position to stop profit-making and economic activity, at least temporarily, with job actions such as sick-outs, work-to-rule, and strikes. While this appears to be common sense to many transit workers, the union leaderships are busy issuing sleeping pills: hiding this potential power, sabotaging any attempts to organize this power, promoting only legal solutions and developing the fear factor to immobilize their membership.

Public Funding

Along with owning banks, factories and

commercial property, these capitalists pretty much "own" the government. They use their control to set up taxes so the working class, those who have no control and have to sell their labor to live, pays the majority of taxes. Therefore, the working class bears the burden of the cost of mass transit, which is funded as a "public" service. Without tax funding, these capitalists would have to pay for some other way to get their workforce to work, increasing the cost of doing business and reducing their profit margin. In this sense, mass transit is a form of "welfare for the rich."

The fact that transit is tax-supported means transit workers' battles for a decent standard of living are played out as an issue of government budgets and deficits. This appears different than the battle between workers and owners of private businesses (like auto or steel) where capitalists just pocket the profits that come from cutting their workers' wages or getting tax bailouts. The transit budget requires that "transit workers must sacrifice to stop transit service cuts and to prevent waste of taxpayer's money." (see article about AC transit, above).



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