

# REVOLUTIONARY TRANSIT WORKER

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Election Campaign Leaflet September 21, 2015

## TWU Local 100 Elections & the Crisis of Working-Class Leadership

Across the country the working class is suffering the continued decline of its living standards and we face an even more fearful future. The banks and finance capitalists that drove the country and world into economic crisis in 2008 continue to rule, thanks to Washington's bailouts. Warning signs now point to them driving toward another crash. And as always, racism means that Blacks, Latinos and immigrants suffer the worst economically, as well as the most intolerable abuses by the police, courts and prison system.

The uprising of protest that began last year against police murders of unarmed Black people did more than just challenge this country's ongoing racism. Driven by the desperation of working-class and poor youth of color, those struggles began to set an example for the entire working class of how it can turn to its own power to organize and act in defense of its interests – after years in which supporting and lobbying ruling-class politicians has led to

nothing but defeat and betrayal.

In this context, New York City's transit workers, organized in TWU Local 100, have tremendous potential power: "We Move New York" and by our collective action we can shut down the financial capital of the world. It's that power that won a better standard of living for ourselves and our families. It is that power that can defend our living and working conditions. And most importantly, by exercising that power our union could play a larger and inspirational role, if we stand up not just for ourselves but against economic and social injustice more broadly. We could fight against the fare hikes and rising rent, against police brutality and racism, and against the declining living standards facing all workers (union and non-union alike). We could stand up for a better life for all.

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## Vote for the Candidates of Revolutionary Transit Worker!



RTW Candidates for Executive Board and Convention Delegate: Track Worker Jason Hicks, Train Operators Seth Rosenberg and Eric Loegel, Conductor John Ferretti.

We, supporters and friends of the League for the Revolutionary Party and its newsletter *Revolutionary Transit Worker*, are campaigning for positions on the Local 100 Executive Board and as Convention Delegates. This campaign is not about us as individuals. It is about the need to end the backstabbing of workers by their own leaders and mobilize the working class in united struggle in defense of its interests.

For over 25 years, supporters of the League for the Revolutionary Party in TWU Local 100 have fought for the workers' demands, big and small, including for safety and against harassment and mistreatment. At the same time, we have explained that we believe the struggles of working-class and oppressed people must culminate in revolutions that overthrow capitalism in order to begin to really solve their problems.

Since 2001 we have published *Revolutionary Transit Worker*. We worked hard around the 2005 strike: in the lead-up to it, during it and afterwards, putting out frequent issues of *RTW* to develop and publicize demands worth fighting for and ideas for how to win them – and then participating heavily in the vote no campaign afterward.

*RTW* was the only publication that most workers saw that discussed the strike movement and how to move it forward. Most recently, we were the most vocal and organized opposition to vote down Samuelsen's sellout contract last year – handing out thousands of flyers and sharing information and organizing the Facebook page "Stop Samuelsen's Sellout Contract".

Workers who want to fight back can use this election season to publicize the program of *RTW* and vote for our candidates. We know that the odds are against us, and that if we do win we'll be a minority on the Executive Board. But we are not aware of any other slates or candidates that have a record of serious fightback proposals,

much less a perspective for how to deal with a world in economic crisis. Even without winning, votes for *RTW* will send a message that more and more people want to see a fightback against the attacks on the working class.

Over time, we hope to convince workers of our revolutionary socialist perspective. If you're not convinced of that but you see the need for militant defense of workers' rights and living standards, you should still vote and campaign for us: send the bosses and union leaders a message that you stand against all givebacks and support an action program to start to fight back now. Send the union leaders a message that things have got to change!

We are running for EB because it is the place where discussion and voting should determine the policy of the entire local. Many Local 100 members have never heard of the EB – or those that have don't pay much attention to it because it just serves as a rubber stamp for the president and his cronies. By serving on the EB, we would challenge this practice and be a voice for the ranks to help workers across the local hold their elected leadership accountable.

The current top-leaders want the members to give up on changing the board and to accept that it will never be accountable to them. This way they can continue their cushy existence as middle-men between the workers and the bosses and politicians. That's why revolutionary socialist EB Members will use the EB as a podium to publicize Local affairs and workers' struggles to the ranks. We will fight for whatever mass action is necessary to achieve workers' just demands, from protests to striking.

We are asking the members to vote for us as EB Member precisely to work for change and to be a voice for class struggle. Vote for the LRP/*RTW* candidates to contribute to that process. ★

We have to start looking beyond ourselves. Our hard-won gains are being eroded, even if more slowly than with many other workers, because the bosses and their politicians have been scared to attack us too hard. But just as unions in manufacturing were picked off and their gains rolled back, making it easier to attack public union workers, so too transit workers cannot stand alone. We must fight for ourselves by fighting for and with others.

Local 100 needs a leadership committed to mobilizing the power of transit workers to advance the struggle against all capitalist and racist attacks. Instead, we have a union leadership that supports and lobbies the very politicians who attack us. Our union could be making history. Instead, it is demoralizing and dividing us.

#### **President Samuelson's Missed Opportunities to Organize a Fightback**

If John Samuelson is one thing, he's consistent. He's missed every opportunity to rebuild this union and lead a united struggle for economic and social justice.

He took office in 2010 and presided over the biggest layoffs this union has seen. He organized a few ineffectual protests while whining that he didn't want a confrontation with the bosses who were laying off our fellow workers. Then, when the Occupy Wall Street protests started and won sympathy among working-class people, Samuelson failed to seize the opportunity they presented to work with other unions, students, unemployed workers, etc. to build a united struggle against the layoffs and budget cuts. This failure set the course for a two-year impasse for our contract.

Samuelson went on to claim "victory" in negotiating behind closed doors to prevent the worst of Tier 6 pension changes falling on TWU workers. But it's not a real victory to take a big hit on pension contributions and overtime caps without even attempting to organize a fightback. Samuelson's false claim of "victory" focuses on the deals agreed to by other union leaders being worse than the one he made for Local 100. But this is really an admission that he refused to challenge the other union leaders on selling their own members even farther down the river without attempting to build a united movement against the pension attacks. Yet more proof that no one who seeks to advance our union's cause should support Samuelson or his slate.

#### **Samuelson's Contract Betrayal**

Then came our most recent contract in which Samuelson helped anti-worker Governor Andrew Cuomo get re-elected at the expense of transit workers and the rest of the working class. How did he do this? Long Island Railroad workers were poised to strike in the middle of the election campaign. The potential for solidarity from Local 100 meant that Cuomo feared that the power of united struggle by us would force him to make concessions right when he was trying to develop a reputation as being tough on unions as well as "law and order." But Samuelson sabotaged the potential for a united struggle by cutting a separate deal with Cuomo and abandoning the LIRR workers. This lousy pact – which ensures we keep falling behind cost-of-living increases – decisively undercut the bargaining power of the LIRR workers and helped Mayor Bill de Blasio set a wage ceiling for NYC public workers. At the same time, Samuelson agreed to force new hires to work longer to reach top pay, having already overseen diminishing their pension plan.

Most recently, with the Black Lives Matter protests, the strongly worded statement condemning the December 20 killing of two NYPD officers stood that Samuelson rushed to issue was in stark contrast to his belated and vague comments on the need for justice for Michael Brown and Eric Garner. And worst of all, after welcoming the already notoriously racist cops' association leader Pat Lynch onto Local 100 stages in the past, Samuelson refused to condemn Lynch and break ties with the PBA after Lynch's outrageous support for the cops who murdered Eric Garner.

Transit is one of the few jobs Black and Latino youth in this city can look to as a way out of poverty, but instead of building a joint struggle with them Samuelson has made that path steeper and harder. His failure to lead a massive struggle against layoffs and his agreement to worsening conditions for new hires sent a clear message to the young Blacks and Latinos protesting police

# **Get in Touch With RTW!**

**Let us know what you think of our views.**

**If you agree, let us know.**

**If you disagree, let's discuss it.**

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injustice: "We're not there for you. We're selling your future down the river." Those protesters, with far less resources than our union, have done more than President Samuelson to revive a mass movement against injustice, cutbacks and other attacks on working-class people by the ruling class. Joining with them would have gone a long way toward energizing our own struggles against layoffs and for a good contract.

#### **The Need for a New Working-Class Leadership**

Many individual workers who support the idea of mobilizing in protest and struggle to defend their and the rest of the working class's interests will nonetheless vote for Democrats because they are disgusted with the Republicans' right-wing attacks, racist demagoguery and contempt for public-sector workers. But the political alliance with the Democrats that Samuelson supports is aimed at avoiding protest and struggle. It attempts to win better deals with elected Democrats by not embarrassing them by challenging their anti-working class policies.

To build the kind of movement we need if we are to have any hope of defending our rights and living standards, transit workers need a leadership that rejects supporting either of the ruling class's parties and is prepared to mobilize the working class in struggle. And we need a leadership that stands for a real defense of not just transit workers' immediate interests, but also stands in solidarity with those most affected by this system's poverty, racism and other injustices. We need that sort of solidarity to build the mass struggle we need and because the interests of the most exploited and oppressed people are ours in that their condition is what the system is driving us all toward.

In this union and throughout the working class, we must build a new political leadership prepared to put these principles into practice. We are ready to join together in united action with all workers who support the idea of mass struggles against the attacks on the working class, regardless of differences over other political ideas. But we also clearly explain that we think that the political leadership the working class needs must be revolutionary and socialist. That is because the interests of the capitalist system and the working class are fundamentally opposed and the only way to overcome this world's exploitation and oppression is by overthrowing capitalism and building a socialist society of abundance and freedom. ★

# **Joe Campbell's Slate: No Answers, No Alternative**

Union election campaigns should be waged based on several key issues: the candidates' records, their political perspective and their willingness to fight in defense of workers' interests. This election campaign, however, will mostly be a mud-slinging fight between the two big slates led respectively by John Samuelson and Joe Campbell.

The Samuelson and Campbell slates can only sling mud because they have no principled differences. While Samuelson is the one currently running the union into the ground, Campbell's slate represents the side of those who got our union into this mess.

"Transport Workers United" is a continuation of the slate of Roger Toussaint. It was then-President Toussaint's betrayal of our 2005 strike and his dictatorial and petty backlash against dissent in the union that are the main reasons Local 100 is now so weak and divided compared to what we could be.

Campbell's slate might sometimes correctly point to the flaws of Samuelson's administration – it would be hard to miss them after all. But insofar as they refuse to reconsider Toussaint's own greater betrayals, they as a slate are a lost cause. Indeed after their fall from power, their focus has been on getting back into office and not on trying to advance the biggest struggles possible against the layoffs and the sellout contract, for instance.

Only such horrendous leadership as Toussaint's could've laid the foundation for any illusions that the tame and uninspiring Samuelson could offer any alternative. Now that he has demonstrated such a lack of leadership, many miss the days of Toussaint standing for something— even if it was wrong. But transit workers deserve better. We need better. And together we will have to build a better leadership, one that stands for mobilizing working-class power against all of capitalism's injustices. ★