

REVOLUTIONARY TRANSIT WORKER

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Election Campaign Leaflet

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The Scandal of Union Officials Joining Management

On the job, we all experience the basic division between those of us who work together to provide a valuable public service, and the other side that “manages” by harassing us – often while displaying the greatest incompetence.

Every day, management harasses Local 100 members at work and even at home when we call in sick and they send their spies to check where we are.

Each time that negotiations for our contract approach, the bosses’ harassment escalates and they write us up more than ever for supposed infractions. They do this to try to intimidate us so that we won’t support a strong struggle for a better contract. And when, despite all this, we’ve dared go on strike, TA bosses all the way down to the lowest-level supervisors have stayed on the job and tried to break our solidarity.

So it’s clear: the bosses know what side they’re on in the class struggle.

All union members also need to understand that the interests of workers and bosses are opposed to each other. A gain for one is a loss for the other. Workers need unions so that we can organize to defend our interests against the bosses.

Before we had a union, they could fire workers just because they didn’t like them or so they could get their cousin a job. Safety regulations? Before there were unions, there were none.

The fact that transit workers have a union is an important gain, no matter how much weaker Local 100 has gotten under its sorry excuse-for-leadership. It means that we have an organization to turn to when we face attack.

The problem is that Local 100’s current leadership headed by John Samuelsen, like that of the labor movement in general, sees no alternative to the bosses’ system that relies on keeping us down. In fact, these leaders enjoy privileged positions in the system because of their role in controlling us. And the main opposition to Samuelsen’s crew in the current elections, the slate led by Joe Campbell, aim only to enjoy the same positions at our expense.

As most workers know, many union officials and candidates for union office have seen the chance to run for union positions as no more than a way to

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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 making serious proposals for a fightback 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. ★

get out of having to do hard work like the rest of us. Instead, they want to enjoy the power and better pay of bureaucratic positions above us.

In office, such bureaucrats might try to maintain the support of workers by opposing some of the bosses' attacks. But because they accept and benefit from the system that relies on keeping workers down, such bureaucrats will discourage us from mobilizing in a struggle that challenges it.

That's why it should be no surprise that officials and candidates from both the Samuelsen and Campbell slates have taken tests to become supervisors. It is, nonetheless, a scandal. After all, recognizing the fundamental opposition of workers and the bosses, our union's by-laws clearly state:

“Should a person who is serving as an Officer or in any other elected position, after being elected, apply for a non-Local 100 bargaining unit supervisory or management position, such person can be removed and barred from office for 18 months ...”

Campbell's slate features a number of candidates who are on lists to become supervisors: Executive Board candidates in RTO Allen Hendricks, Tyese Hatcher, and Reinaldo Denny. Samuelsen's slate likewise includes the following candidates who are on supervisory promotion lists: Janice Carter, Curtis Lemon and Robert Taylor. As well, candidate Nicholas Vrettos is on record admitting that he took the last test to be a supervisor and has refused to pledge that he won't take the position if it is offered to him.

And among current union officials, Sharon Watts (RTO Towers Vice Chair), Tareque Ahmed (Stations Executive Board member), Tracy Wilkes and Shawn Graves (Surface Executive Board members) all applied for supervisory positions while holding union office. Wilkes was elected as a member of Campbell's last slate while the rest are Samuelsen allies. (We should add that Roger Toussaint's former appointed head of Track Division, Cipriano, is now a boss who goes out of his way to harass Local 100 members.) On this, as on so much else, the two slates share all the wrong things in common.

How can either slate be trusted to run the union if they include individuals who want to join the bosses and get paid for writing us up? How can they be trusted to defend the union and its members against the bosses if they promote individuals who stand in contempt of the union and its by-laws by trying to join management? The answer is: these slates can only be trusted to sell us out.

Revolutionary Transit Worker candidates in the current union elections have exposed this treachery and filed charges against current office holders who took a test to join management. In response, both slates have refused to move against their boss-loving members and instead have attempted a cover-up.

The Executive Board overwhelmingly rejected hearing the charges against

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the incumbent officers on the technicality that the by-laws in question were being revised at the time the officers took the tests. But the charges did not depend on this by-law. These officers swore an Oath of Office and declared their loyalty to our union's constitution. They pledged “to bear true and faithful allegiance to the International and the Local Union and the cause of all organized labor” and accepted that any act “prejudicing or damaging the interests and welfare” of the union would be grounds for their removal from office. They obviously betrayed their oath by applying to join management against us. But by dismissing the charges, refusing to demand their resignations and even promoting some for re-election, the Executive Board has in effect said that such treachery is fine by them.

For as long as our union is led by individuals who are prepared to join the bosses against us if the price is right, we will always face sellouts and betrayals. Transit workers cannot allow this sad state of affairs to continue.

To defend our conditions, we need a leadership that recognizes that the bosses' wealth and power comes at our expense. We need a leadership that refuses to be corrupted by the lure of the bosses' wealth and power and is dedicated to the collective struggle to defend and improve the conditions of all working-class people.

The campaign by supporters of *Revolutionary Transit Worker* in the current union elections aims to contribute to building such a leadership. It is a continuation of their daily work to help the working class become more aware of their interests and better organized to defend them. They will receive the support of workers who know they can be trusted to keep the members informed and resist both the bosses' attacks and the betrayals of our interests by sellout bureaucrats.

In this struggle we are confident that over time, more workers will come to appreciate our broader vision. We fight for a workers' movement that champions the cause of all working-class, poor and oppressed people. And we fight for a socialist world in which the division between bosses and workers, exploiters and exploited, rulers and ruled is brought to an end and the society's wealth and power taken into the control of the working class so it may be used to bring prosperity and peace to all. ★

How the Betrayal of New Hires Undermines All Workers' Futures

Transit is one of the few places in this city where working-class people can hope to earn a decent wage doing meaningful work that serves the public. That's especially true for young Blacks, Latinos and immigrants who still face the barriers of racism. And that's why it's especially despicable that our union's leaders, headed by John Samuelsen, have followed the lead of other sellouts in agreeing to worse conditions for new hires that make the road out of poverty steeper and longer.

In the last contract, Samuelsen & Co. agreed that new hires would have to work even longer before reaching top pay – what used to take three years now takes five! Since then, when Governor Cuomo put forward a plan to make over \$30 billion in debt re-payments plus billions more in interest to the Wall Street by forcing new hires to pay three times more in pension deductions, Samuelsen agreed to help him by not protesting the move.

Selling out new hires is hardly unique to the Samuelsen leadership. Not a single member of Joe Campbell's opposition slate who was on the Executive Board at the time of the last contract voted against the betrayal. Sure, they complained about the contract, but they accepted it in the cynical belief that a bad contract would make their election chances better.

In fact, selling out new hires is a standard divide-and-conquer tactic used by union bureaucrats everywhere. They agree to these deals to help the bosses and politicians save money at workers' expense while helping themselves stay in office with the support of older workers who they encourage to be thankful that they haven't got it so bad.

But these betrayals do no favors for workers with seniority. After all, Democratic and Republican politicians in cities across the country are escalating attacks on public workers' pensions. The same selfish attitude that Samuelsen & Co. encourage among older workers today will doom those them in the future if new hires adopt it. When current workers retire, they'll need today's new-hires to defend their hard-earned benefits.

Our union leaders' betrayal of new hires goes along with their acceptance of worsening conditions for the rest of the working class. Thus our union leaders have accepted fare hikes and service cuts as the price for maintaining transit workers' wages and benefits. But that just contributes to the isolation of public sector workers from the rest of the working class and

allows the bosses and politicians to paint us as greedy when we fight to defend ourselves. And just as all economic attacks hit youth and people of color hardest, these sellouts contribute to the worsening injustices of faced by young Blacks and Latinos especially.

Revolutionary Transit Worker supporters are running in the current union elections to promote an alternative vision to capitalism's setting of one group of workers against another. We believe working-class people can only hope to defend their jobs and living standards by uniting in struggle. We fight for this vision in the unions because they are almost the only organizations the working class has today and could offer powerful solidarity to the rest of the working class in its struggles.

Importantly, we fight with the conviction that the working class will only be able to unite against the bosses' and politicians' attacks by championing the interests and struggles of the most vulnerable and downtrodden – the struggles of young people for a better future, the struggles of Blacks, Latinos and immigrants against racism, the struggles of women against sexism, the struggles of all the oppressed for liberation.

In this spirit, we've seen the “Black Lives Matter” protests against racist police injustice as pointing to the way forward for all working-class people. The protests were driven by working-class and poor Black youth who chanted Eric Garner's last words “I can't breathe!” to express how they are being choked not only by police brutality, but by diminishing opportunities for education and decent jobs as well. After decades in which the working class was told to forget about the direct action of protests and strikes and instead place their hopes in electing and lobbying politicians, those protests are an example to follow.

The numbers of workers prepared to support our vision of struggle are growing. Our candidates in the current election will welcome the votes of workers who know they can trust them to resist every attack on workers' interests. And we hope more workers will get interested in what we believe is the only ultimate solution to the worsening life that capitalism is dooming us all too: the culmination of all the struggles of the workers and oppressed in revolutions that overthrow the system and build a socialist world of freedom and plenty in its place. ★