

REVOLUTIONARY TRANSIT WORKER

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Mass, Militant Workers' Actions to Stop MTA's Attacks!

MTA Management has declared war on transit workers. On top of their old takeback demands they now demand expanded One-Person Train Operation, privatized cleaning and maintenance in some stations, and making all platform personnel clean stations and go on track for disabled trains. Only mass, militant working class actions, not pleas for sympathy from politicians, will push the MTA back.

But pleas for sympathy seem to be what Samuelsen & Co are depending on, along with small-seeming takebacks. These include a longer contract, five years instead of three; and a worse situation for new hires. New employees already make higher pension contributions. Now the union leaders want many of them to pay more for medical coverage, and to make them wait five years to get top pay and 4-weeks yearly vacation.

Perhaps Samuelsen & Co hoped that the MTA would be so moved by this sacrifice that they would give us raises of 3% - 4% each year for five years. Predictably, however, when the union went in offering concessions, the MTA saw weakness and redoubled their attacks.

UNION BUREAUCRATS' BANKRUPT STRATEGY

The "strategy" of selling out future employees is helping to drive the union movement in this country into the ground. Each loss weakens the unions and gives future employees less reason to fight to preserve our wages and benefits. Further, it sends a signal of weakness to the bosses and to other workers who could be won to fight with us.

Look at what the concession strategy "won" for private sector unions—no pensions, no good healthcare, wage losses, job losses—to see where that fight-to-lose plan is leading the public sector. The United Auto Workers, formerly one of the most powerful unions in the world, has bargained away so much that there is little difference in



Bay Area Rapid Transit strikers showed will to fight management attacks despite union leaders' givebacks.

most wages and conditions between union and non-union auto shops.

WAR ON WORKERS AND THE POOR

While Samuelsen is putting our gains on the chopping block, most workers and poor are getting hit harder than us—and the union movement as a whole in this country is helping lead them to defeat instead of organizing resistance. President Obama is preparing to attack such "entitlements" as Social Security and Medicare. The only questions are when and how much, not if.

"Fighting" for a contract by selling out new hires is no way to energize workers for the mass movement we need to resist the big attacks coming down on all of us. It offers no plan of action, no vision, for joining with other workers in struggle to better all our conditions.

We need to stand up against the bosses' divide-and-conquer tactics that pit public against private sector workers, union against non-union, etc. (See other article in this issue.) This union could stand up against all the attacks, calling for no fare hikes or service cuts and fighting with all the other city workers without contracts to preserve the gains of past struggles as well. This would mean taking on the policies and interests of the Democratic Party, which, despite their differences, join the Republicans in leading the charge against workers and the poor. ★

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Workers' Defense Means: Fight Back against Capitalism!

For years we have faced stagnating or declining living standards, enforced by the politicians of both anti-working class parties, as well as by the ruling capitalist class they represent. The capitalists insist that workers and the poor must pay for the economic crisis which the capitalists caused. Anger against these attacks and against rising inequality, stop-and-frisk and other racist police harassment spreads among workers, especially the youth and people of color. More and more, they seek a way to fight back.

However, leaders of unions, U.S. workers' only mass organizations, respond with the same old pro-capitalist electioneering and lobbying which never worked before. They refuse to mobilize the power of their own members, let alone help other workers fight back. They sometimes volunteer givebacks before the bosses even ask for them! The main resolutions of the AFL-CIO and TWU International Conventions rarely mention the word "strike", let alone start the discussion and preparation we need for mass strikes and general strikes against austerity and increasing poverty.

Samuelsen and the rest of TWU's leaders exemplify this approach. Check out the give-back contract he's proposing to the MTA (See article "*Mass, Militant Workers' Actions to Stop MTA's Attacks!*" on the front of this issue). TWU Local 100 and almost every other public sector union in New York City have been working under expired contracts. Samuelsen and other union leaders hold occasional tame demonstrations and pay lip service to mass militancy. Their real program is to get politicians to make promises or else...the union might vote against them 4 years from now! The two parties, Democratic and Republican, serve only the capitalists. De Blasio, liberal Democratic candidate for mayor, has assured the Wall Street parasites that he's not their enemy, while saying little about the hundreds of thousands of union workers in NYC working without contracts. We should be clear that he's on the bosses' side just as Lhota is.

The recent AFL-CIO Convention and TWU International Conventions call to recruit non-union workers. But this is not in order to mount mass struggles. Instead, they plan more lobbying to modify the current laws which make it near-impossible to vote for union representation. But history teaches us that workers won union rights largely through mass, militant recognition strikes. And Black people won civil rights and job opportunities through the mass, militant movements and rebellions of the 50's through the early 70's. Samuelsen and his ilk may poohpoo the thought of masses taking to the streets against the

capitalist attacks. But there has been motion, and the union leaders have ignored, diverted or sabotaged it.

For example, when Trayvon Martin's murderer walked free, at least 10,000 people turned out to express their anger in New York City and thousands more all over the country. TWU Local 100 has 38,000 members, mostly from communities victimized by racist cop attacks. If Local 100 had thrown all its resources into this struggle, we might now see a continuing movement against the attacks on workers and the poor.

Also, many non-union fast-food and retail workers have bravely demonstrated and even struck for living wages of \$15/hour, reasonable job schedules, union rights and other basic demands. This is a working-class *and* anti-racist fight, as many fast-food workers are immigrants and people of color. Unions have given help. Even here, the union leaders show their pro-capitalist program: a NYC leader of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) openly admitted that the SEIU might agree to a wage ceiling for fast-food workers in return for union recognition from the bosses.

Workers and young people who want to fight will look to unleash the working-class and anti-racist struggle. They will see the need to break with the Democrats, the capitalist "good cop" party to the Republican bad cops. They will see the need for mass strike action – say, by all the NYC public sector workers with expired contracts – to defend our living standards and make gains. They will see the opportunities for unions to fight for the needs of all workers: for cheap, efficient transport (Local 100 should make NO FARE HIKES a demand worth striking for), free health care, free, meaningful public education from pre-K to post-graduate, jobs for all through massive public works ... That's a way to bring new layers of workers and poor into struggle and impede capitalist moves to divide workers against each other.

These struggles will show the need for a new political leadership for the working class, our unions and other organizations; a leadership which fights only for the workers' interests, not for a new deal with the capitalists. That has to be a revolutionary socialist party. We can't wait to act while the capitalists destroy the planet and the union leaders destroy the unions. If there's any opportunity to force the current union leaders to act, we must take advantage of it. But as the majority comes to see the need for workers socialist revolution, they will oust the pro-capitalist misleaders and replace them with a revolutionary leadership which won't sell out. ★