

# REVOLUTIONARY TRANSIT WORKER

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## *Don't be Fooled by Samuelsen's Lies!*

# Vote NO on this Wage-Cutting, Giveback Contract!

The Samuelsen leadership is conspiring with management against Local 100 members. They are trying to trick us into voting for their contract deal by telling us a pack of lies about it. That's why Local 100 members have already begun voting in their division meetings to reject the deal – on January 18, Train Operators in their PM Division Meeting voted 27-3 in favor of a motion to reject the sellout deal that was raised by *Revolutionary Transit Worker* supporter Seth Rosenberg. All Local 100 members should follow this example and **Vote No!**

In an outrageous act of disrespect to Local 100 members, an attack on our democratic rights, and a break from past practice, Samuelsen & Co. are refusing to release the proposed contract to the membership so that we can judge it for ourselves. They are even refusing to release the “Memorandum of Understanding” (MoU) that summarizes the deal. They claim that it would be expensive to print and mail, but they won't even post the contract or MoU on the union website. It's obvious that they want to hide the truth from us.

Instead of providing us with the facts, Samuelsen & Co. have produced an advertising brochure that they are mailing to members along with ballots to vote on the deal. Their brochure promises in big headlines that the proposed contract's “Wage Increases, Bonuses and Many Other Economic Enhancements Will Keep Transit Workers Well Ahead of Inflation!” and that there are “No Givebacks! No Concessions of Any Kind!” But as we will prove in a moment, *these are all lies*.

First, however, we must note that Samuelsen & Co.'s contract brochure highlights a number of modest improvements that should be welcomed by the workers who will benefit from them, but they are the type of small gains that bosses often concede to help sellout union bureaucrats hide their much more costly concessions. For example, CTAs (Station Cleaners) will finally be paid time-and-a-half for shoveling snow – something they've been demanding for decades while other transit workers already received this basic compensation for exceptionally hard labor. But that hardly makes up for the shocking betrayal of CTAs in the last contract in which Samuelsen & Co. stuck new hires with a starting pay rate of 60% of

top rate. Other small gains that could have been won long ago if we had a union leadership that was serious about mobilizing our power to win include the MTA's pledge to finally provide safety boots which won't cripple us; women employees are at long last supposed to see improved health care, better facilities and considerations for their rights – decades after the passage of major women's rights laws; MTA Bus Maintainers will get a real 8-hour day, like the rest of the membership; and Articulated Bus Operators will get \$1/hour premium pay, up from 25 cents – decades after “artics” were first introduced.

These small improvements should not blind us to the brochure's outrageous lies that try to cover-up a rotten deal:

### ► **A Wage Deal Well Below Inflation that Means a Real Wage Cut**

In his “Message From TWU Local 100 President” in his brochure, Samuelsen declares that “While inflation averaged 1.6% last year, your annual salary will increase 5% under this new agreement.” But every Local 100 member must sense that the cost of living has been rising faster than the rate of 1.6%. Samuelsen bases that claim on the Consumer Price Index released by the Federal government. But it is well known that the CPI is rigged to make the rising cost of living seem much lower than it really is, and any union leader who relies on the CPI should be ashamed.

Everyone in New York knows that “The Rent's Too Damn High!” In Manhattan, average rents increased by 8% in 2015 alone.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile gentrification is driving up rents in the boroughs – neighborhoods in the South Bronx saw apartment rental prices increase by 10-15% alone last year.<sup>2</sup> The government's CPI buries the rising cost of rent by assuming that people spend less than 10% of their budget on rent while reality is that in New York now,

<sup>1</sup>[www.ny.curbed.com/2016/4/27/11520040/rental-market-reports-manhattan-highest-rent](http://www.ny.curbed.com/2016/4/27/11520040/rental-market-reports-manhattan-highest-rent)

<sup>2</sup>[www.welcome2thebronx.com/wordpress/2017/01/26/rents-on-the-rise-in-the-south-bronx-as-overall-nyc-rents-drop/](http://www.welcome2thebronx.com/wordpress/2017/01/26/rents-on-the-rise-in-the-south-bronx-as-overall-nyc-rents-drop/)

people typically spend half to two-thirds of their income on rent!<sup>3</sup>

So the fact is that the two 2.5% wage raises in Samuelsen's proposed deal will see our real wages continue to be cut by inflation – and that's before president Trump tries to institute his trade war plans that threaten to send the cost of living skyrocketing.

Local 100 members should also understand that in addition to Samuelsen & Co.'s direct lies, they also conspired with management to produce some serious "smoke-and-mirrors" tricks to make our wage deal look better than it is. Samuelsen vowed that a 2% per year raise was not enough, and that he would fight for more – he ended up with 2 2.5% raises over 28 months. The math clearly shows that the average raise per year is just under 2.17% – barely above 2%. Clearly what happened is that the TA wouldn't budge, but helped Samuelsen massage the terms of the deal by extending the contract expiration date and adding a cash bonus so that he could spin it in a way that is more palatable to members. Again, this is an example of Samuelsen and the TA working together as partners against the membership.

► **"No Concessions" – a Flat-Out Lie!**

Samuelsen & Co.'s claim that their proposed contract features "No Givebacks! No Concessions of Any Kind!" is a flat-out lie. Consider the OTO (Overtime Offset) changes in RTO and MOW: members can currently take off as many OTO hours as they accumulate. However, the new contract would mean that although members could accumulate and roll over more OTO hours, they could only take off no more than 72 OTO hours a year. What's the use of being able to bank and retain more OTO when we'd be forced to use less of it?

The hardest hit by this will be new hires who have less vacation time and probably fewer AVAs (Available Vacation Allowances) banked. Local 100 bureaucrat Steve Downs admitted at a January 25 Shop Steward Assembly that he negotiated the new cap on OTO in order to get management to agree to the sick-time cash-out program. However, the sick-time program is only a "pilot program" – it will only be continued if the TA sees a significant decrease in the average sick-time usage per employee. And if the sick-time pilot program is cancelled, there is no language for the OTO cap to be removed!

What kind of negotiators gives up a serious concession for a "pilot" improvement which will most likely be taken away? Sellout negotiators who conspire with management to betray us, that's who. And adding insult to injury, they're hiding the truth about this dirty deal from the membership, not mentioning in their contract brochure that the sick-leave program is a pilot program. They know how bad that would look. So they hope to bury the truth.

The union agreed to this deal in the hopes of winning the votes of senior Local 100 members who are looking to retire soon. The raises are pathetic, so Samuelsen hopes to sway these members with a pot of gold that most will most likely never see, especially the new hires. It's yet another divide-and-conquer attack that the TA and union leadership are subjecting the membership to.

With both the OTO usage cap and the sick-time cash-out, Samuelsen & Co. are joining with the TA in trying to get more time at work out of local 100 members, with the hope of needing fewer workers to do the same amount of work.

► **Past Givebacks That Screw New-Hires Especially Will Continue**

And let's not forget the other givebacks and concessions that Samuelsen & Co. have made in recent years that this contract threatens to continue:

In 2012, Governor Cuomo was looking to hand Wall Street more than \$30 billion in debt repayments and billions more in interest, and he wanted NY State workers to pay the price with massive pension givebacks. Samuelsen rushed to Cuomo's aid, agreeing to the Tier 6 pension for new hires, tripling their pension deductions – really a massive wage cut. He even called this a "victory" because he got a deal to make it less bad for us than other workers. But this is exactly the kind of divide-and-conquer strategy we should be fighting.

During Local 100's last contract round, Long Island Rail Road workers were preparing to strike after being forced to work without a contract for more than three years. A Federal mediator appointed by President Obama found that the MTA should accept the LIRR union leaders' proposal. But Cuomo figured that being tough with the unions could win him ruling-class support for his presidential ambitions, so he pushed the MTA to reject the deal. With the LIRR unions refusing to give in, the stage was set for a strike.

Samuelsen again helped out. He agreed to a significantly worse deal for Local 100, including beneath-inflation wage raises for all, and an extra 2 years of work for new hires to reach top pay. So the LIRR workers were unable to threaten a united struggle with the TWU. Cuomo and the MTA charged them with greed for wanting more, and their leaders caved in.

► **A Contract Deal That Betrays the Rest of the Working Class Too**

Not only does Samuelsen & Co.'s contract deal sell out transit workers' immediate interests, it betrays the rest of the working class as well.

Having captured the White House, racist authoritarian Donald Trump is set to follow his attacks on undocumented immigrants and Muslims with attacks on civil rights, women's rights and the unions, using racist divide-and-conquer tactics. Local 100, with our majority people-of-color membership and great potential power, could have used our contract campaign to begin to unite working-class and oppressed New Yorkers in a struggle to defend our living standards and rights. We could have not only mobilized in a struggle to defend and improve our own immediate interests, but we could have also demanded an end to the fare hikes that act like tax increases on working-class and poor people. Instead, Samuelsen & Co. took no action against the fare hikes, just like they refused to mobilize the union in support of the Black Lives Matter protests of the last two years.

Voting NO on Samuelsen's sellout contract can be a first step in not only beginning a real struggle in defense of transit workers' interests, but also in preparing a united working-class struggle against Trump's coming attacks, and in building a new leadership in Local 100 and the rest of the working class that can lead those struggles to victory. ★

***Vote NO on Samuelsen's Sellout Contract!***

## **Contact Us!**

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<sup>3</sup> [www.nbcnewyork.com/news/local/NYC-New-Yorkers-Spend-Nearly-23-of-Income-on-Rent-in-2016-StreetEasy-376497101.html](http://www.nbcnewyork.com/news/local/NYC-New-Yorkers-Spend-Nearly-23-of-Income-on-Rent-in-2016-StreetEasy-376497101.html)