

contract with a win-win attitude, the agreement was hammered out without a strike.

The real winners in the agreement were Local 234 members, who responded by ratifying the package by a landslide 10 to 1 margin.

The contract provided transit workers with a 17.5 percent wage boost plus COLA over a three year period. Normal retirement age was reduced to 55 with 30 years of service, and a solid pension increase was secured. Dr. Martin Luther King's Birthday was won as a paid holiday, and the last unpopular elements of the job reclassification plan of 1979 were overcome with the upgrading of numerous jobs and the separation of others that had been unwisely combined in the reorganization program.

The union protected health and dental benefits with no out-of-pocket costs to the membership; defeated management's perennial campaign for part-time workers and retained the "no layoff" clause.

#### **LOMBARDO BECOMES PRESIDENT**

Shortly after the 1989 contract was in place, Local President Roger Tauss resigned his office to join the International Union staff as and



International Representative.

Executive Vice President Harry Lombardo filled out Tauss' unexpired term per the Local's by-laws. A year later, Lombardo was elected President by an overwhelming margin.

No sooner had Lombardo become President when new storm clouds developed in the form of a national recession causing fiscal crises for the City, the State and SEPTA.

Many State lawmakers began pressing for legislation mandating privatization of SEPTA's public transportation services.

*LEFT: Harry Lombardo is congratulated by International President George E. Leitz after taking over as President of Local 234 in April 1989.*

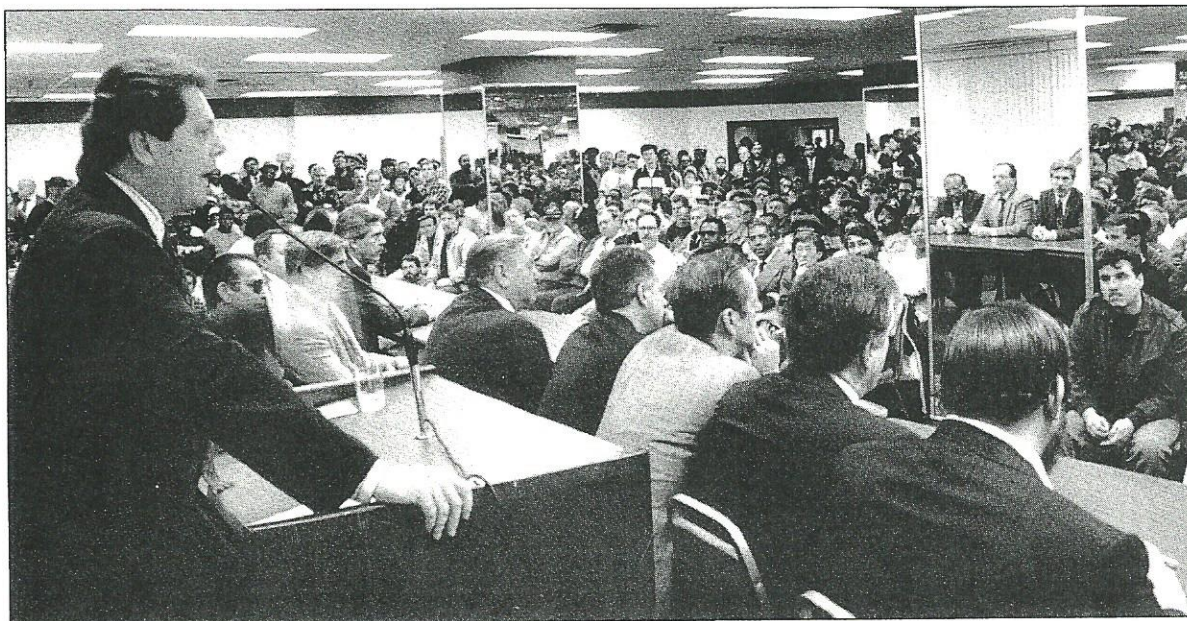
*BELOW: Lombardo (at dais) addresses standing-room-only mass membership meeting in February 1992 as the March 15th strike deadline approached. The strike was not needed.*

Local 234 met the challenges aggressively. Under Lombardo's leadership, the Local greatly expanded its political activities to help friends of labor retain their jobs, and defeat TWU's enemies. Lombardo also helped form a coalition of the City's major public employee unions, including the Firefighters, Teachers, AFSCME Councils 33 and 47, Postal Workers, SEIU and of course TWU. The coalition conducted a media campaign, organized public forums to enlighten citizens about the hidden costs of privatization of public services and lobbied the state legislature.

#### **DEFEAT PRIVATIZATION BILL, WIN FUNDING BASE**

This exhausting political work paid off for transit workers in the summer of 1991.

The first key victory was the TWU-led







*Local 234 President Harry Lombardo announces contract settlement in March 1992. International President George E. Leitz is at right; Local Executive Vice President Steve Brookens and Vice President John Ropars, Jr. are between Lombardo and Leitz.*

defeat of a bill championed by Senate Republican Doyle Corman that sought to contract out, or privatize, 10 percent of SEPTA's lines per year. If passed, the bill would have destroyed at least 500 TWU jobs per year.

Lombardo and fellow union officials Charles Grugan, Sabin Rich and Bruce Bodner shuttled between Philadelphia and Harrisburg for three months. Back home, Steve Brookens, John Ropars and Jeff Brooks oversaw a grass roots letter writing campaign. The unified efforts turned back the Corman bill.

But the fight was not over. While fighting against privatization, the same team fought for an adequate funding base for SEPTA. The suspenseful political drama went down to the wire with a win by one vote. Final passage gave SEPTA and other transit agencies in the State substantially increased funding for capital improvements.

Inside the Local, the Lombardo team continued to focus on "organizing the organized." The strategic goal of the leadership was to unite and empower the members by involving them directly in

committees structured to advance their common interests; safety and health committees, job description committees, parking committees and other labor-management meetings were established to improve working conditions and solve problems on the job.

The Local also began to streamline its headquarters operations resulting in an ever increasing dollar surplus to support the union's various campaigns on behalf of the membership.

### **1992 CONTRACT BATTLE**

The positive work and preparations of the Local positioned it well to meet the formidable obstacles at the bargaining table during negotiations for the 1992 agreement.

SEPTA, which normally came in with a page of giveback demands, this time presented the union with 18 pages of concessions.

Among them were proposals for co-payments for health insurance, part timers, fewer vacation weeks, elimination of the no lay-off clause and attacks on seniority and worker rights.

The union was determined to prevent loss of health care benefits. And it was determined to win, once and for all, a new pension formula that would guarantee that Local 234 members would retire with dignity.

They were determined to accomplish these goals and if necessary to do so with a region wide strike that would include the Local's Frontier and Red Arrow bargaining units. Fortunately, the union's goals were achieved without a strike, but it wasn't easy. The contract was ratified by the SEPTA Board by a narrow margin and only after a month long public battle over whether SEPTA could actually afford the contract.

### **MANAGEMENT FORMULA FOR PENSION**

After two successive contract go-rounds (1986 and 1989) when the union won important pension improvements and put the pension plan on sound financial footing, the 1992 contract put the icing on the cake.

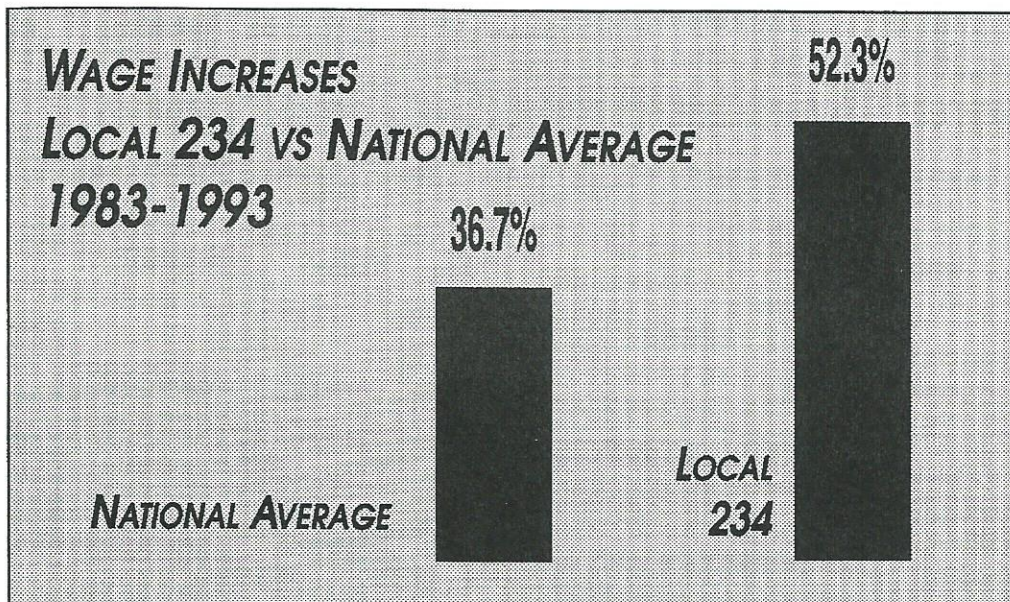
The union won the SEPTA management formula for calculating a member's pension based on wages up to \$35,000 a year. The new formula in effect doubled the amount of pension for new retirees from \$606 per month to \$1,365 per month with 30 years of service.

### **HEALTH BENEFITS SECURED**

Health care was the most contentious issue of the negotiations. The union nailed down its members' benefits without benefit reductions or co-payments. This was accomplished by convincing the Authority to set up a cost containment committee, which then arranged three-way give and take

50th

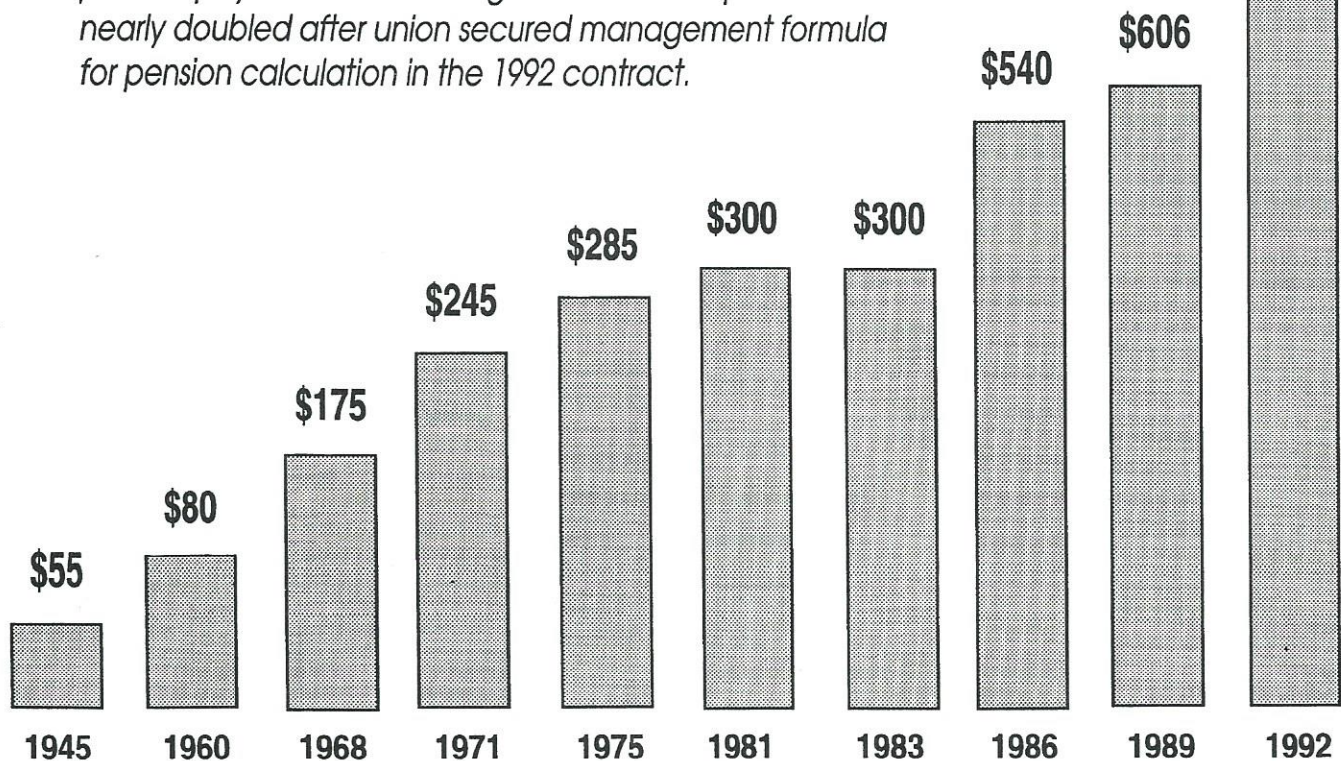




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## PENSIONS FOR TRANSIT WORKERS SKYROCKETED WITH 1992 CONTRACT

*This chart shows the slow advance of the monthly pension payment until 1986 agreement. Note pension nearly doubled after union secured management formula for pension calculation in the 1992 contract.*





bargaining between the Union, SEPTA and the health care providers themselves.

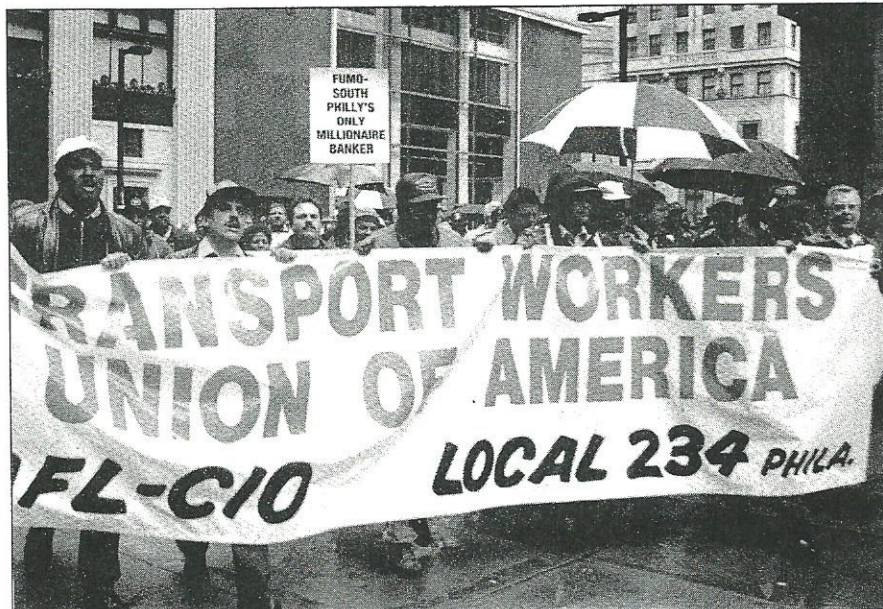
Not only did the new approach to health benefits prevent loss of services and co-payments, the union actually was able to win improvements in vision and dental benefits. This victory was in stark contrast to other Philadelphia public sector unions which were pummeled over the health care issue during their 1992 contract negotiations.

#### WAGES, PICKING RIGHTS FOR MAINTENANCE

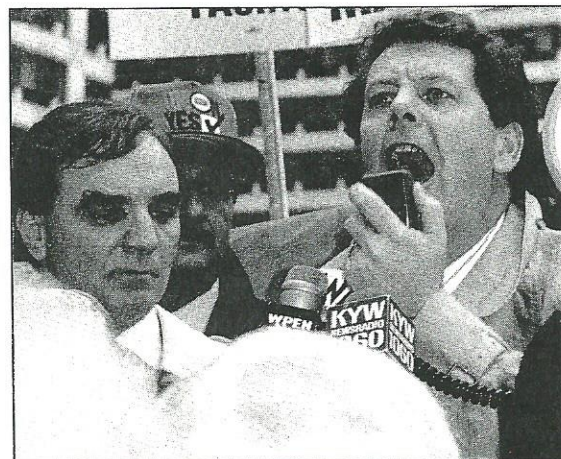
The union also secured a solid wage package amounting to 10.9 percent, plus COLA and a \$500 lump sum signing bonus over the life of the agreement.

Finally, the union secured a breakthrough for Maintenance employees. Since the first contract negotiated by TWU in 1944, rail and bus operators enjoyed the right to pick work assignments.

But not the maintenance workforce. But thanks to Harry Lombardo's leadership, maintenance workers now exercise the right, usually twice a year to pick their shifts, days off and their work assignments. Lombardo, the first person from maintenance to be elected to Local 234's top office, is particularly proud of this accomplishment.



*ABOVE: Local 234 members hold rally demanding that the SEPTA board approve 1992 contract. RIGHT: Local 234 President Harry Lombardo addresses the rally. BELOW: Bruce Bodner, chairperson of the Local's safety program conducts meeting of safety representatives in early 1993.*





# Keeping Connected in Washington



*Local 234, in the past ten years, has worked tirelessly in the political arena to insure the union's clout in Philadelphia, Harrisburg and Washington, D.C.*

*ABOVE: Local 234 President Harry Lombardo greets First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton at affair in 1993, RIGHT: Lombardo and Executive Vice President Steve Brookens (left) greet Gordon Linton, a former Pennsylvania State Representative, now the head of the Federal Transportation Administration in the Clinton Administration.*





# Local 234

## THE FUTURE LOOKS BRIGHT

Local 234 is stronger today than ever before thanks to the hard work and sacrifices over these 50 years by thousands upon thousands of TWU members and officers who dedicated themselves to the improvement of the lives and jobs of transit workers.

No one can predict what will happen in the years ahead. But it is clear from the Local's rich and proud history that so long as the union remains united and its leadership team pursues the twin objectives of coalition building and membership empowerment it will be extremely difficult for anyone to deny Philadelphia's transit workers justice on the job, a decent standard of living and dignity upon retirement.



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# CITY COUNCIL APPROVES RESOLUTION HONORING LOCAL 234

*A resolution introduced by Councilman David Cohen honoring Local 234 on its 50th Anniversary was unanimously passed by the Philadelphia City Council on May 27. The resolution praised the efforts of TWU during the past five decades to raise the standards of living and improve the working conditions of the Local's 5,800 members. An engrossed copy of the resolution was presented to President of Local 234 President Harry Lombardo as evidence of the sincere sentiments of the Council. The Council Resolution is printed below.*

## RESOLUTION

### *CONGRATULATING THE TRANSPORT WORKERS UNION LOCAL 234 ON ITS 50TH ANNIVERSARY*

**WHEREAS**, The Transport Workers Union Local 234 (TWU) represents 5,600 members employed by the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA), Access Paratransit Company, and Upper Darby Township; and

**WHEREAS**, The certification of the TWU as bargaining agent for transit workers employed by the old Philadelphia Transit Company fifty years ago provoked a wildcat strike by a minority faction against Black workers in the union. Under the leadership of Michael Quill, International President of the TWU, the strike ended in victory for the union; and

**WHEREAS**, Since its creation in 1943 the TWU has worked on behalf of its members to improve their standard of living and quality of life and has worked hard on behalf of the riding public and the community at large to expand the availability of transit services and stabilize the economic underpinnings of our mass transit system; and

**WHEREAS**, In 1988, the TWU joined with SEPTA in a program of labor management cooperation designed to put an end to the constant conflict and strife that for many years had characterized the relationship between SEPTA and the TWU; and

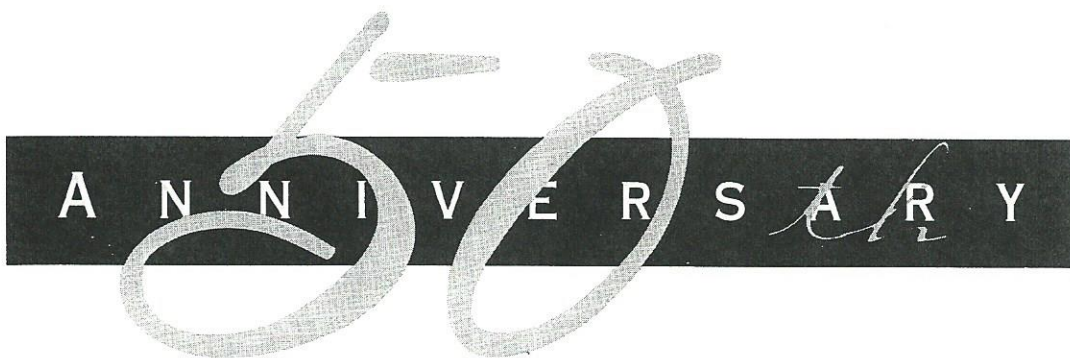
**WHEREAS**, During the 1989 contract negotiations, the Union and the Authority agreed to a comprehensive joint health and safety program to reduce vehicle accidents on our City streets, injuries to SEPTA passengers, and hazards to the environment; and

**WHEREAS**, in 1991, the TWU launched a massive lobbying effort on behalf of a dedicated funding base for public transportation, and with the assistance of many of Philadelphia's political, community and civic leaders, secured a stable source of funds for SEPTA and other transit authorities in the state; therefore

**RESOLVED**, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA that we hereby honor and congratulate the Transport Workers Union Local 234 on its 50th Anniversary.

**RESOLVED**, further, that an engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to Harry Lombardo, President of the TWU, as evidence of the sincere sentiments of this legislative body.

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*"Local 234: 50 Years Today, A Vision of Tomorrow"*

*Produced by*

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*Designed By*

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*James Gannon, Director*

*Contributing Editors, Robert Wechsler, Bruce Bodner*

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