



On The Move

October 20, 2014

Official Publication of TWU Local 234

www.twulocal234.net

STRIKE AUTHORIZATION MEETING

The day of reckoning is fast approaching. Despite the Local's best efforts, SEPTA's negotiators continue to march to the anti-union tune of Board Chairman Pasquale Deon. SEPTA's latest proposal would *freeze our pension benefits* at current levels for five years, require all TWU members to contribute *10% of the premium* for health insurance, which is approximately \$2,636/year for family coverage, and force us to eat substantially higher co-payments for office visits, hospital services, and prescription benefits. Meanwhile, the Authority's offer would limit our wage increases to *6% over five years* (0, 1%, 1%, 2%, 2%). SEPTA's proposals are non-starters. They simply show that SEPTA is daring Local 234 members to strike.

The bottom line is this. SEPTA thinks TWU members are **second class citizens** and we don't have what it takes to fight them. As a result, SEPTA's bargaining team has adopted classism as its guiding principle in the negotiations. They believe that the families of supervisory personnel are entitled to pension benefits in excess of **\$8,000 a month**, but they want to cap our pension benefits at \$2,500 a month. They think it's OK to raise management's wages 5%, or more, a year, while the people who do the work should accept average wage increases of **less than 1% a year** between now and 2019! In addition, SEPTA wants us to pay 10% of our health insurance premiums, while managers pay only 5% of the premium.

The strike is a weapon of last resort. Nobody likes to go on strike. Nobody wants to deal with the financial difficulties and sacrifices that strikes usually cause, but there comes a time when we have to stand up for ourselves and our families. We have to be willing to sacrifice in order to close the intolerable gap in pension benefits between SEPTA workers and managers. We have to fight to secure wage increases that will enable us to maintain a decent standard of living. We have to fight to keep our health benefits intact, without having to pay thousands of dollars in premiums and thousands more in additional co-payments.

It boils down to this. SEPTA's double standard is affecting every issue on the bargaining table, leaving the Union with two simple choices---surrender to SEPTA's outrageous demands or fight to protect our jobs, our families and our standard of living. To win, every Local 234 member must be on board with the program. We have to squash the naysayers, put aside petty differences, join together on the picket lines and in the streets and be determined to fight for what is rightfully ours. This is a critical time for Local 234. SEPTA intends to test our resolve and our solidarity like never before. We have to respond by staying united, however challenging the situation might get.

**Strike Authorization Vote, Sunday, October 26,
3:00 P.M., Sheet Metal Workers Union Hall,
Columbus Blvd. & Washington Avenue**