



On The Move

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GUNS, KNIVES AND UNION DEMOCRACY DON'T MIX

Local 234 must draw a line in the sand to Stop Threats & Intimidation of Union Members

Local 234 prides itself on its long history of promoting and practicing a healthy brand of rank and file union democracy. For Local 234, union democracy involves the democratic election of the Union's officers at the Executive Board and section officer level. However, for Local 234, union democracy involves much more than elections.

- ▶ Union democracy entails the **free and open debate** between union members and union representatives regarding the direction and priorities of the Local.
- ▶ Union democracy entails **free and open criticism**, even loud and boisterous criticism, of the officers and representatives of the Union, when the members feel such criticism is warranted.
- ▶ Union democracy entails **membership participation** at section meetings, where everyone is free to offer their views and opinions without fear or intimidation at the hands of the officers, or other union members in attendance at these meetings.
- ▶ Union democracy also requires **respect** for the opinions and views of others.

The leadership of Local 234 strongly believes that without a vigorous and open democratic process inside the union and without the active participation of the members in the affairs of the union, the strength of Local 234 will wither and the Local will become ineffective as the representative and guardian of the members' interests.

Operator Crosses the Line at Southern's November Section Meeting

Unfortunately, some Local 234 members think its ok to use strong arm tactics to impose their views on other members. These members don't seem to realize that Union democracy demands respect for the views of those with whom they disagree, a willingness to listen to others, and the ability to draw the line between voicing one's opinion and trying to browbeat others by acts of verbal and physical intimidation.

At the section meeting for Local 234 members from Southern Transportation, held at the Union Hall on November 11, 2014, union democracy came under attack by a member who tried to bully and

intimidate his brothers and sisters from freely participating in a discussion at the section meeting about the recently ratified contract and other issues of importance to the members in attendance.

At the beginning, only words were exchanged. However, things got out of hand and a line was crossed, when a member from Southern got into a physical scuffle with a co-worker and decided to **pull a knife and then a gun** to intimidate him and, in the process, place the lives of twenty other union members at risk. After cutting his co-worker with the knife, the operator decided to brandish a gun in the direction of the entire crowd, causing everyone to run for cover. The situation got so out of hand that the police had to be called to protect the lives of the members and the property of the Union.

Soon after, a co-worker from Southern brought charges against the disgruntled member, alleging violations of the TWU International Constitution, particularly conduct unbecoming a member of Local 234. More specifically, the charges rested on the member:

“(1) recklessly brandishing two deadly weapons, including a firearm and a knife, in the direction of other Local 234 members at the Union Hall, threatening and causing fear of death or great bodily injury to other union members; and,

(2) creating havoc in and around the Union Hall to such an extent that the police had to be summoned to protect the lives of members present and the property of the Union.”

The Local’s surveillance cameras caught the entire scene on video.

By his intimidating and extremely dangerous conduct, this member crossed a clear line that all unions, especially Local 234, must treat as intolerable, especially for someone holding an elected or appointed union office.

We cannot Condone, Excuse, or Brush Aside Threats of Deadly Violence

Local 234 cannot condone, excuse or brush aside what happened on November 11, 2014 at Southern’s section meeting. As a result, the Executive Board of Local 234 suspended the accused from his position as a section officer, in accordance with Article XIX, Section 4 of the TWU Constitution. In addition, the Executive Board voted to bring the case to trial on December 2, 2014, before a trial committee appointed by the Board, as mandated by the International Constitution.

Just like our criminal justice system, a Local 234 member charged with violating the Union Constitution is considered innocent until proven guilty. This principle will apply to the trial of the brother from Southern Depot. However, make no mistake about it, if the charge of brandishing a deadly weapon in the direction of other Local 234 members is proven, the guilty party will be penalized to the fullest extent allowed under the TWU Constitution and Local Union By-Laws.

Brothers and Sisters. This is a serious matter, requiring the Local to send a clear and unmistakable message to the entire membership of the Union:

Guns, Knives and Union Democracy Don’t Mix.

Threats, intimidation and bullying of other union members in our sections, at section meetings, or anywhere else where union members congregate, will not be tolerated in Local 234!