



# On The Move

May 16, 2016

Official Publication of TWU Local 234

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**Midnight, October 31, 2016**

## **ARE WE READY TO RUMBLE?**

You can tell your spouses, children, friends, neighbors and riders that if authorized by the membership and if necessary to obtain dignity on the job and economic justice at the bargaining table, Local 234 will strike on **October 31, 2016, at 12 midnight**. While no one can be sure what will happen in October, we can assume that SEPTA will provoke a strike, since it is resistant to reforms that benefit the workers. Since we have time to prepare, there can be no excuses or cause to complain if we have to walk in October. And if SEPTA sees our members preparing for a strike, the Union gains leverage at the bargaining table to get the reforms and changes we need.

The Local made a strategic decision in 2014 by entering into a short-term, two-year contract that expires on October 31, 2016. As a result, we didn't pay for a "Cadillac Tax" that didn't take effect and we weren't forced to work out the details of pension reform *while walking the streets*. The two-year contract should give the Local an edge again in the 2016 negotiations, but only if SEPTA understands that the strike deadline is **a line in the sand**.

The Local has already been negotiating over pension reform and health care. With the addition of wages, and pay-parity for underpaid job classifications, we intend to address a range of issues from job security, to contract enforcement, to the way our members are treated on the job.

Let's be clear. Our goals will not be easy to achieve. On the economic front we are fighting for costly reforms. On the non-economic front, we are challenging an ingrained managerial culture that refuses to respect the rights of our members or the commitments SEPTA made at the bargaining table in prior rounds of negotiations. Meanwhile, all around the country, anti-union politicians are pushing for contract concessions from public employee unions to balance their budgets and weaken our bargaining power. In many states, including ours, Republican majorities are trying to destroy public sector pensions, health benefits and collective bargaining rights.

**Thus, Local 234's fight for contract reforms pits us against a trend that must be broken.**

Whether we succeed will depend on the skills of the Local's negotiating team and the unity and determination of the members. This fight cannot be won if we are guided by *individualism instead of unionism*. Individualism focuses on the narrow interests of a small group of members, concerned only about themselves. Unionism *focuses* on what benefits the whole and unionists are willing to fight on behalf of all. Unionism strengthens us by bringing us together under a common agenda, individualism divides us and weakens our position at the bargaining table.

By the same token, our negotiating team recognizes that different groups have different concerns, concerns that are legitimate and should be addressed. If they're not addressed, the problem of individualism can get worse. However, we can't negotiate for one group *at the expense of another*. That's a recipe for disaster. What we can do is negotiate over legitimate issues that affect specific groups of workers and keep these issues from being forgotten. Given the importance of these **non-economic**, work-life issues, if **SEPTA refuses** to deal with them seriously between now and October 31, the probability of a strike will increase.

Here's where things stand at the moment. A large number of members returned their contract surveys. In addition, members have raised contract issues at their section meetings. We are putting together a comprehensive list of contract demands. What follows is a partial list of issues the Local intends to raise in negotiations to improve how our members are treated on the job and to eliminate the hassles members get from SEPTA managers each and every day.

- Establish vacation and day-off quotas in maintenance that meet the needs of our members for earned time off-the-job (whatever the outcome of the pending arbitration case).
- Increase recovery and lunch time so that operators can use the restrooms when they have to and get the chance to eat lunch.
- Address issues relating to sick leave, family leave, notice requirements and sick pay. Some of these problems require the elimination of unnecessary red-tape and bureaucracy, i.e., AmeriHealth.
- Apply Progressive Discipline to chargeable pedestrian accidents with no serious injuries.
- Address work assignments, equipment and pay for snow or severe weather work.
- No AWOLs during weather emergencies. A member who can't get to work because of a weather emergency should not be charged with an AWOL.
- Limit the use of cameras and the Authority's new GPS system in maintenance vehicles, by denying management the right to conduct unwarranted and unnecessary surveillance.
- Repeal the agreement limiting the Union's right to use video tapes to expose and capture assailants of bus operators and trolley drivers.
- Require time studies that use a cross-section of the workforce, not just the fastest worker, to set reasonable production goals, stop playing the "Process Summary" game.
- Expand expedited arbitration to include *contract* grievances selected by the Union.

The Local is ready and determined to address these and other issues in the 2016 round of collective bargaining. The membership must be ready and determined too.

## **WE MUST AND WE WILL**