



On The Move

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Strike Authorization Meeting, Sunday, 11:00 a.m.

On Sunday, October 16, 2016, the members of Local 234 will meet at the Sheet Metal Workers Union Hall to authorize the leadership of the Union to strike if SEPTA refuses to negotiate a fair and reasonable contract that provides for pension reforms, quality health care benefits, decent wage increases and improvements in working conditions for transportation and maintenance employees. Passage of the strike authorization vote will give our bargaining team the leverage it needs to move the negotiations forward as we get closer to the expiration of the CTD contract on October 31, 2016 at 12:00 midnight.

The negotiations for a new contract officially began on July 13, 2016. Many issues are being discussed, including pension benefits, health care, and non-economic reforms to improve conditions and the quality of work at SEPTA. President Willie Brown will report on the status of the negotiations at Sunday's meeting. Yet, we can state that, at this point, SEPTA appears determined to provoke a walkout by refusing to seriously address the union's contract proposals, while pushing hard for major concessions impacting our health care, wages and other benefits.

A lot is at stake in these negotiations. The Union is pushing hard. SEPTA is pushing hard. We have a unique opportunity to win improvements for our members and their families that may be difficult to obtain down the road. As a result, it's time for the *entire membership* to come together to fight for a good contract while resisting SEPTA's unacceptable bargaining demands. We may need to rumble for our survival. We have to be ready.

Philadelphia transit workers have a long history of tough fights

James Wolfinger, author of *Running the Rails*, a history of transit workers in Philadelphia, recently spoke about his book at the Union Hall. *Running the Rails* brings to life some epic battles waged by Philadelphia transit workers fighting for decent pay and working conditions over the fierce resistance of transit management. *Running the Rails* relives one of the most memorable strikes in American labor history that occurred in Philadelphia in 1910.

In late 1909, transit union leaders confronted the Philadelphia Rapid Transit Company (PRT) with demands for an hourly wage of 25 cents for motormen and conductors, the right to buy uniforms on the open market, limiting workdays to 9 or 10 hours and recognition of the union. The PRT refused to even meet with workers representatives and a strike ensued.

The company tried to break the strike. They hired scabs from New York and Boston. Violence broke out, with trolley cars, tracks and wiring destroyed, police brutality and wholesale

arrests of strikers followed. Still the strikers got strong support from the community. Philadelphians hated the PRT for laying track all over their neighborhoods, injuring children playing in the streets and providing poor service to the public. With public outrage boiling over, the union called for a city-wide, general strike. Union workers throughout the city heeded the call to increase the pressure on the politicians and the PRT. Business nearly came to a halt and the general strike spread, leading to sympathy walkouts along the East Coast. In the end, transit workers won a wage increase from 21 to 22 cents per hour and a ten-hour work day.

The strike of 1910 may seem like ancient history to many members, but it is important to recognize that the forces fighting transit workers in 1910 are not much different than the forces fighting us today. They believe they are better than us. They believe that our wages and benefits should be inferior to theirs. They claim they don't have the money to address our needs, but have plenty to address their own. In 1977, these same people launched an attack against our members that lasted for 44 days. In 1998, history repeated itself with a 40 day strike. Be ready. Like our brothers and sisters in 1910, if we have to fight, we can't afford to back down.

Union recovers \$36,000 in pay over subletting bargaining unit work

SEPTA management did it again. They sublet bargaining unit work to an outside contractor without giving the union notice and without engaging in meaningful discussions about the necessity for subletting, as required by Section 431(a) of the contract. The subletting violation involved work normally performed by carpenters and building repair employees in the Buildings Department. As soon as the Union discovered the contract violation a grievance was filed. On October 7, 2016, the case settled. As a result, thirty-three Local 234 buildings workers received a total of \$36,000 in back pay. Thus, SEPTA had to pay twice for the performance of the same work---all the result of poor management and disrespect for the union contract.

Big arbitration win over vacation days off in rail maintenance

After three days of hearings and the filing of briefs, our members had to wait two years to get a decision in arbitration over SEPTA's violation of a vacation picking agreement dating back to the 1980s. SEPTA's rail managers didn't think they had to honor a binding agreement over vacation day off quotas so they concocted a scheme to minimize the number of people who could take a vacation day off, by setting a location rather than job classification quota and by combining vacation days off with all other types of days off, personals, earned days, etc.

The arbitrator upheld the union's grievance and ordered SEPTA to: employ the established ten-percent classification based quota for taking vacation days off, separate and apart from other forms of leave, effective with the date of this award---October 3, 2016. If the Authority fails to act soon to implement the award by conducting a new day off picking in the affected locations, Fernrock, 69th, Street and Woodland Shop, the union will take further action to enforce our members' contract rights.

WE MUST AND WE WILL!