ARE WE SAFE AT WORK?

“We just come to work here, we don’t come to die.”

LABOR SONGWRITER: ANNE FEENEY
More than 13,000 ATU Facebook ‘Likes’ and growing

ATU has been garnering the power of social media. Thanks to more members, riders and transit advocates spreading the word about the ATU Facebook page by sharing and liking stories, and recommending our page to “friends,” ATU has passed the milestone of 13,000 “likes”.

It doesn’t stop there. Our next goal is 15,000.

ATU uses social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube to engage and inform our members, riders and others interested in public transit about the latest news and developments about ATU, transit, politics and labor issues across the globe.

Get in on the fun. Invite your “friends” and tell your family to “like” ATU's Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/ATUInternational) to help spread the word on what we’re fighting for and more. Plus, don’t forget to follow our Twitter handle @ATUComm to stay up to date on what’s trending in public transit, politics and other progressive issues.

Show your ‘ATU Pride’ with items from the ATU Online Store

Get ready to show your “ATU Pride” – the ATU Online Store is up-and-running!

Go traditional with the new polo or hat, or stand out with an awesome mechanic’s shirt. There are plenty of cool new items, like the comfortable polar fleece, along with older ones, like our member favorite leather jacket.

Whether you’re shopping for yourself or someone else, for big gifts or small, you’re sure to find something anyone would want.

You can visit the ATU Online Store by clicking on the link in the far upper right corner of atu.org, or go direct to http://atu.imagepointe.com/atu/
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DEATH OF A MECHANIC IN ERIE
does anyone care?

By all accounts Jake Schwab was a great guy. A 27-year veteran mechanic working for the Erie Metropolitan Transit Authority (EMTA), many co-workers counted him among their friends.

Local President John Renwick, 568-Erie, PA, describes the former shop steward as a very active man who enjoyed life, and loved his motorcycle. He and his wife had just bought a new home, Renwick says, adding softly, “He was my friend. I went hunting with him.”

“Number one – he was a friend, a friend to everybody, we love Jake,” echoes Dispatcher Nathan Faback.

His co-workers thought so much of Jake that they memorialized him with red mechanics’ towels tied around EMTA bus side mirrors after his death.

Before we go any further, with the details of this tragic accident, there is something important to note. Three weeks before, PennDot had released a report critical of the EMTA. It read in part:

“…no staff member is currently assigned the Safety & Security role as their primary function. This is a critical gap in EMTA’s organizational structure.” 1

PennDOT conducts performance reviews of all systems. These typically focus on ridership and revenue metrics, but they went out of their way to point out this safety problem.

Lack of safety culture

The lack of a safety culture – particularly in maintenance shops – is a dangerous, hidden problem plaguing many transit agencies.

Schwab was working on the suspension of a bus EMTA had contracted to maintain from another property. He was killed when the bus shifted, and the suspension’s air bag blew up sending pieces of metal flying into the mechanic’s face. He died later at a local hospital.

The tragedy was covered by the city’s news media, which reported that EMTA was “tight lipped” about the incident. Renwick says management acted like it was just an unfortunate accident.

Amazingly the agency’s insurance organization, the Pennsylvania Association for Transportation Insurance, a division of the state Department of Labor and Industry, is conducting the investigation. It’s not yet known what the finding of their report will be. Not much else has been said, but it doesn’t seem like an insurance organization has the workers’ safety as its top priority.

Incredibly, it’s possible that no changes will take place as a result of this good man dying on the job. And that’s because unlike the employees of any private enterprise, Pennsylvania’s public workers are not subject to federal OSHA regulations.

There’s no agency looking out for the safety of these transit workers; nowhere to turn when something goes wrong.

1 PennDot “Final Erie Metropolitan Transit Authority (EMTA) Transit Performance Report” October 2014
A deadly fire occurred, January 12, in Washington, DC's Metro system, in which smoke from a subway tunnel billowed into a stalled train, killing one 62-year old woman, and sending 80 more to the hospital. An initial investigation indicates that the smoke resulted from an electrical arc.

Unfortunately, the crisis was made much worse because blowers designed to ventilate smoke out of the tunnels either didn’t work, or blew the wrong way.

Worse yet, terrified riders huddling on the train’s floor had to wait 40 minutes for help to arrive. Responders’ radios couldn’t communicate with each other, and there was confusion about when the third rail would be turned off making it safe to enter the tunnel.

**DC Local: Metro must commit itself to safety culture – now**

**No safety training**

But, worst of all, Renwick says, is that there is no safety training. And this is a problem encountered by other ATU locals as well.

Renwick wants all this to change. “We have to form a group and talk to our politicians,” he says. If nothing else, he believes they should have OSHA’s regulations put in their contracts.

On February 8th, ATU called an emergency meeting of all Pennsylvania Locals to take decisive action to address the safety concerns and fight to protect state public workers.

**Woeful neglect**

Local 689-Washington, DC, responded to the incident, saying that the event has “exposed that the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) has woefully neglected its commitment to a safety culture that can save the lives of riders and workers. The cornerstone of a safety culture for Metro should be an environment where Metro employees feel empowered and welcomed to identify accidents and potential hazards. WMATA leadership continues to fail miserably at cultivating this environment.”

**Boston**

Concern about safety on public transit was ratcheted up a notch after another subway car in Boston filled up with smoke on January 29. A failure in the propulsion system was blamed for the problem. Riders got off five of the six cars, but passengers in a sixth had to kick out windows to let passengers out.

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And things do go wrong. Renwick has seen cuts, and broken arms that wouldn’t have happened if some safety procedures had been followed.

However, the agency gets a break on their insurance because EMTA has a “safety committee” he says. But nothing much happens as a result of the committee’s work.

EMTA is currently building a new facility, so, Renwick says, they’re not putting any more money into their current workplace.

The air in the garage is fouled with exhaust because fans haven’t worked there for a long time; doors that are supposed to remain shut are wired open, he says, adding, that oxygen tanks that are supposed to be in cages are bungee-corded to the wall.

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Toronto ATU tentatively welcomes funding announcement

BUT SAYS BURDEN SHOULD NOT BE SOLELY ON TRANSIT USERS

Local 113-Toronto, ON, tentatively welcomed Mayor John Tory’s announcement of city transit service improvements but said the measures being taken are too modest to make the kind of difference riders want, and that transit users are unfortunately once again being asked to bear the burden of years of Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) underfunding.

“We were led to believe that the mayor was making a major funding announcement,” says Local President Bob Kinnear. “The 10-cent fare increase is not really ‘funding,’ it’s another tax on transit users who already pay more to run their system than anywhere else in North America.”

Why do only transit users pay more?

The Local is asking why transit users are the only ones who have to pay more to relieve congestion on the roads? The TTC is the least-subsidized transit system in North America.

“To be clear, we fully endorse all the announced service improvements,” says Kinnear. “But riders are going to be very disappointed if they think these proposed enhancements alone are going to represent a meaningful recovery from the years of underfunding the TTC.”

Local 113 recently issued its own report on Toronto’s transit future, which calls for substantially more funding, particularly for more vehicles, than Mayor Tory’s plans.

Kinnear says that the union’s proposals, found at TorontoTransitFuture.ca, are more in line with what transit riders want to see happen.

Mayor too cautious

“Of course we’ll take anything we can get but Mayor Tory is being too cautious because he doesn’t want to rile up the people who don’t use transit by proposing even a tiny tax increase; that’s too bad,” Kinnear said.

Saskatoon Local fights for its pension plan, back pay

Local 815-Saskatoon, SK, is taking the City back to the province’s labour board again challenging the legality of the changes the city council made to their pension while the local members were locked out.

Provincial labour law prohibits employers from changing the terms and conditions of employment while its workers are locked out. Local 815 argues that the decision must be reversed regardless of their subsequent return to work.

The labour board declared that lockout illegal and ordered the City to allow the local members to return to work with back pay. But, the City has only given its transit employees half of the compensation the Local believes it owes, and it appears that issue will eventually be taken to court.

This is all happening against the backdrop of stalled contract negotiations that probably won’t be settled any time soon.
The top labour movement leaders in Canada’s three westernmost provinces are putting the governments of British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan on notice: if they are planning to engage in a race-to-the-bottom on workplace health and safety rules, they should be prepared for an unprecedented political battle.

The warning was issued by Gil McGowan and Larry Hubich, presidents of the Federations of Labour in Alberta and Saskatchewan, and Lee Loftus, a ranking officer of the BC Federation of Labour and president of the BC Building Trades Council. The three leaders met in Edmonton, AB, while provincial bureaucrats began the latest round of negotiations on a so-called “New West Partnership.”

Previous rounds of negotiation between the three provinces focused on harmonizing rules related to training, certification and apprenticeship. According to government documents, the new round of negotiations will deal with “health and safety regulations that act as impediments to trade.”

Labour will not sit idly by

“Our message to the premiers of BC, Alberta and Saskatchewan is clear and simple,” AFL President Gil McGowan says: “If you’re going to engage in a race-to-the-bottom on workplace health and safety rules, you’re going to have an unprecedented fight on your hands. The labour movement is not going to sit idly by if rules designed to protect the health and safety of millions of workers are being watered down. We simply won’t let it happen.”

The leaders stressed that the notion that occupational health and safety rules can be seen as impediments to trade is completely absurd. These rules are about keeping workers safe and healthy.

“The only kind of harmonization we’ll consider when it comes to workplace health and safety standards is harmonization upwards,” concluded Loftus from the BC Federation of Labour.

“Instead of engaging in a race-to-the-bottom, let’s have a race to the top. We simply won’t accept anything less. The health and safety of working people always has to take precedence over the whims of corporations, no matter how influential those corporations may be.”

‘Like’ us onfacebook

www.facebook.com/ATUInternational
The ATU General Executive Board has approved International President Larry Hanley’s recommendation to name the new ATU training center the Parks-Douglas Center after Rosa Parks and Tommy Douglas, heroes ATU members honor as two of North America’s most courageous leaders.

Rosa Parks
A woman who risked her personal safety and perhaps her life for the freedom of all Americans, Rosa Parks (February 4, 1913 – October 24, 2005) took bold action by refusing to give up her seat on a Montgomery, AL, bus in 1955.

Her action came to be regarded as a watershed moment in the history of the civil rights movement.

“Rosa Parks was the most effective transit passenger organizer in the history of our nation,” says International President Hanley. “America is a better place today because of the singular stand she took on a bus against segregation.

Tommy Douglas
The man who led the fight in Canada to provide health insurance for all, Thomas Clement “Tommy” Douglas, (October 20, 1904 – February 24 1986) has been called “the greatest Canadian.”

A Baptist minister and champion boxer, he left the pulpit to work for political reform. The powerful orator and tireless activist was elected to serve as a Member of Saskatchewan’s parliament, and later, premier of the province – an office he held for 17 years.

He introduced the continent’s first single-payer, universal health care program; a program that would eventually be adopted across Canada.

After setting up the Saskatchewan Medicare program, Douglas was elected as the first leader of the New Democratic Party (NDP), formed in 1935, to advance the cause of Labour. He was a strong advocate of the Canada Pension Plan and was considered the “conscience” of Parliament on matters of civil liberties.

“A staunch supporter of public transit, Douglas believed in the crucial role of civil rights and the great potential of cooperation for the common good,” says Hanley. “He is a role model for the next generation of progressive leaders.

The Parks/Douglas Center
“The Parks/Douglas Center will open its doors to train many in the tradition of these two leaders,” Hanley continued. “Future generations of organizers will draw from the brilliance, strength and courage of these two models of community action and leadership and we will forever celebrate the generosity of their spirits and legacies. They will live in us.”
ATU: A Union that makes things happen

You will find no grass growing under our feet in the ATU these days. We are living up to our promises:

- Training is expanding, and it is getting better. Throughout ATU our members are learning to do more.
- We are running campaigns in Las Vegas, Atlanta, Washington, DC, fighting for member rights.
- In congressional districts across the U.S. our Locals are fighting against Fast Track - Free Trade—also known as sending more jobs to China and Vietnam.
- In Vancouver, BC, our Locals are campaigning for a referendum to raise funds for mass transit.
- In Winnipeg, MB, this In Transit reports on Local 1505 conducting “ride-alongs” with elected officials.
- In Ontario the campaign against privatization continues.
- In Ohio our Locals are preparing a fight for transit funding.
- In Alabama we are working to build a campaign for transit on the 50th anniversary of Rosa Parks’ arrest on a bus.

One ATU star is Bus Operator Karen Reed who, as a part of Local 689’s campaign for private sector transit workers, rose in a church packed with 850 activists to tell her story of working 65 hours a week but still being homeless while working for First Transit’s discount wages in the U.S. Capital. Her brilliant speech to the new mayor of Washington can be seen at www.atu.org under videos. Please watch this member tell the story about the impact it has on workers when private companies run transit.

In Scranton, PA, members of Local 168 have done a great job of organizing riders, and through the riders, preventing service cuts and layoffs. I am proud of the energy that is exploding around our Union.

While training continues, we are renovating our own new training center and as you will read in these pages, the General Executive Board has agreed with my recommendation to name our campus in honor of a couple of the best organizers in our two countries’ history, Rosa Parks and Tommy Douglas.

As you read their stories and feel their humanity I’m sure you will sense the power of their compassion for their fellow citizens. Both fought for the dignity of regular people and in winning health care for Canadians (Douglas) and civil rights for Americans (Parks) they set the bar for us all.

We hope that many generations of community and labor organizers will emerge from our trainings at the new campus. We expect a dedication of the new campus in Silver Spring, MD, in the late spring of 2015.

So much is coming together right now for the ATU - we are seeing great success in organizing both new members and our existing ones.

Finally, we are about to establish the Joint Industry Councils and at the same time put more resources into the safety of our members. The recent tragic death of Jake Schwab, a mechanic and member of Erie, PA, Local 568, brought to us a reality we are compelled to deal with. Too many of our mechanics work without proper training and without adequate safety procedures.

We promise to grow our safety campaigns – for mechanics to be trained and protected from hazards and bus operators to be protected from assaults.

Some Locals have really picked up the fight for bathroom breaks and their stories in this issue highlight the success your Local can have. This is again an issue of basic human dignity. So all in all, I can report with sincerity and with confidence that the ATU is, more and more, a Union that makes things happen.

Please visit www.atu.org for more information and the latest ATU news.
On July 21, 1969, the world watched, held its breath, and prayed for the safety of astronaut Neil Armstrong as he began his decent from the lunar module to the surface of moon. This was the successful culmination of a vision, a plan and a collaborative effort toward a goal shared by many Americans.

The vision was first articulated in an address delivered by President Kennedy on September 12, 1962. In describing his vision and his goal Kennedy declared:

“Its hazards are hostile to us all. Its conquest deserves the best of all mankind, and its opportunity for peaceful cooperation may never come again. But why, some say, the moon? Why choose this as our goal? And they may well ask why we choose to climb the highest mountain? Why?”

…but because they are easy

“We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy,” he said, “but because they are hard, because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one which we intend to win”.

Bill Gates had a vision when he established Microsoft. He saw a path to harness the power of room-size mainframe computers and shrink them down to our desktops. While many doubted Gates’ vision, his goal became a reality.

Steve Jobs also had a vision when he started Apple computer. He believed he could take Microsoft’s success one step further. Why be bound to a desktop for information? Why be tethered to a wall to make a call? Jobs took computers from our desktops and put them in our pockets.

These innovators had vision and understood the value of goal setting and follow-through. Their accomplishments were not easy. Indeed, their visions were fulfilled, some might say, against all odds.

ATU’s vision

At our last Convention the delegate(s) from your Local and others approved a vision and plan to move our ATU forward. The Convention was the culmination of President Hanley’s discussions and interactions with Local officers leading to a vision, and the subsequent crafting of a plan, and course of action toward a tangible goal.

To date we have achieved a measure of success, but have many miles to go and can’t afford to rest.

We choose to do this, as President Kennedy said, “not because it is easy.” No, we do this because, no matter how insurmountable the obstacles may seem, it is something we must do if we are to keep faith with our values, and our commitment to provide better service for our passengers, a better life for those we love, and for those who come after us.

A vision, however, is only a daydream until people come together to make it a reality. That’s where you come in. We need you to join us in the great work that you see described in page after page of this magazine.

Nothing can stop us if we all work together.

Please visit www.atu.org for more information and the latest ATU news.
I'm writing on a cold and rainy winter morning in Washington. It’s pretty miserable outside. Far different from Northern California where I lived before coming to DC.

The political climate doesn’t seem much different – at least from the point of view of those of us who fight for working people and public transit. All we hear is “gloom and doom.”

Yes, it’s important to see things clearly. It doesn’t help to pretend that things are better than they really are. They’re not invincible. But, it also doesn’t help to think things are worse than they really are; that the Koch brothers, the TEA party, and their anti-labor friends in American and Canadian legislatures are all but invincible – because they’re not.

You hear people say that union members don’t get involved in political action because they are comfortable and apathetic. But, I think a lot of people stay home because they think that little can be done about the injustice we’re fighting.

A lot more of us than there is of them

I’m reminded of an old expression: “Don’t give the devil more than his due.”

By that, I don’t mean that those who oppose us are “devils.” What I mean to say is, yeah, things are tough right now, but, even so, our opponents are not all-powerful, 10-foot-tall giants whose ideas can never be defeated.

Nope, they’re just people who have a lot of power because they have a lot of money. But there are a lot more of us than there are of them, and, believe me, no force can beat us if we are united and politically active – in other words, if we have “solidarity.”

There are many examples in history of leaders who accomplished great things because they refused to believe that nothing could be done about the injustice they experienced in their lifetimes. Leaders like Mother Jones, Tommy Douglas, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., fought on when others said their missions were pure folly, or, even worse – dangerous.

A reason to hope

They attracted thousands to their cause because they gave people hope. By lifting people up, they gave them a reason to get involved. We’d do well to follow their example.

So the next time you hear a news report on the inevitability of bad things happening to workers or public transit – don’t believe it.

We have the power to stop bad things from happening, and to accomplish a lot of good. But, we have to begin exercising that power while it’s still winter.

Remember, no matter how cold, dark and miserable it gets – spring is just around the corner. And spring, particularly here in Washington, is really beautiful.

Please visit www.atu.org for more information and the latest ATU news.
Guelph members get access to washrooms and lunchroom

For many ATU members, adequate time for bathroom breaks and access to clean and warm facilities have been ongoing and troubling issues.

Guelph, ON, transit workers were suffering with that situation, but thanks to successful contract negotiations over the summer, and some great cooperation with the University of Guelph, the members of Local 1189-Guelph, ON, now have access to washrooms at the university and a climate-controlled lunchroom. The drivers can even access the washrooms around-the-clock.

“We are continuing to work with the management team at the City of Guelph to address the needs of our union members and ensure quality working conditions at all times of the year,” says Local President Andrew Cleary. “We thank the Guelph Transit management team and the University of Guelph for being so responsive to the needs of our drivers this season.”

Second Washington Local takes up washroom campaign

In our last issue In Transit reported on the fine the Washington Department of Labor and Industries (L&I) levied on King County Metro for failing to provide bus drivers enough locations and adequate time to use the restroom. The agency was also forced to submit an improvement plan to the state before the end of the year.

The action was a direct response to the work Local 587-Seattle, WA, had been doing on the issue for several years. Now Seattle’s sister Local, 1576-Lynnwood, WA, is undertaking a similar campaign to get First Transit to clean up it’s act there as well.

The campaign was instigated when management took a picture of a messy bathroom in their building that was broadcast on their in-house TV feed with the message: “This behavior is not acceptable, and it disrespects your fellow employees.”

That message provoked the following response from Local 1576:

‘We are not pigs’

“Our members have been subjected DAILY to filthy, unsanitary and inaccessible Sani-Cans out in the field, which are only cleaned every 3-7 days and often not stocked with even basic hand sanitizer, let alone running water and towels.

“We report these conditions, bring them to Labor/Management meetings, and even call the vendors to no avail. In fact, management blames us! Where is OUR RESPECT? We are human beings, and their employees. It really makes me wonder, when management has to resort to name calling and public humiliation after a few paper towels are left on the floor, while simultaneously refusing to provide us with clean and available restrooms… WHO IS REALLY THE PIG?”

‘Let’s do something about it’

The Local then laid out its plan: “When you see poorly maintained restroom facilities, or if you are driving a route that has no facility available, LET’S DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT. Please take pictures of the conditions AND cleaning schedule (posted on the wall) and forward them to the union. If there is no facility available to you, we need to know about that as well. We will be taking our concerns to the company, the Board of Directors, and L&I.”

In Transit will keep you posted.
DC paratransit driver reveals poverty, conditions caused by privatization

TESTIMONY MARKS TURNING POINT IN DC-AREA CAMPAIGN

In heart-wrenching and passionate testimony a Metro Access paratransit operator gave new Washington Mayor Muriel Bowser and 850 DC residents a first-hand look at the grim impact transit outsourcing has on working families.

Speaking on a January evening to a packed house at St. Augustine Catholic Church in Washington, Operator Karen Reed brought tears to Mayor Bowser's eyes as she described the financial struggle she endures as an employee of a private, for-profit company contracted by WMATA (DC's transit agency) to provide paratransit service. Reed was one of several speakers at a Washington Interfaith Network (WIN) forum on public services held for the new mayor.

Second class citizens

Attended by members of Local 689, International President Larry Hanley, and the ATU General Executive Board, the emotional event marked the next phase of ATU’s campaign to fight outsourcing of transit services, to strengthen transit investment in local communities, to unionize, and to raise the wages of area transit workers who for too long have been treated as second class citizens. Through their involvement with WIN, 689 has been building alliances with congregations, riders, community activists, and labor allies to broaden their support.

“Karen's story is the story of thousands of workers in the DC area,” says International President Hanley. “It brought the whole church to tears, including Mayor Bowser.”

The power and emotion of Reed’s story hit home for many.

‘Disposable people’

“It would be a smoother ride for everybody if WMATA and First Transit would stop cutting corners and stop treating me and my fellow workers like disposable people,” said Reed, who emphasized the importance of her job in transporting people with disabilities and seniors.

“Employee turnover is through the roof and customer service suffers.”

She was joined on stage by Barbara Mushette, one of her passengers, who praised Reed's dedication to the job and questioned the scheduling policies of First Transit and its treatment of workers and passengers alike.

$26,000 per year

Reed talked about the importance of her connection with riders and the accompanying dangers she and her co-workers face every day, from bad road conditions to robberies. Reed is dedicated to her work, but is paid only $26,000 per year (less than 30% of area median income), which qualifies her and her daughter for food stamps, housing assistance, and Medicaid. She and her daughter were homeless for three months last year.

“You are going to pay me either way. In my public benefits check – or my paycheck,” she explained in relating her need for public assistance to survive. “I enjoy working for a living. Stop insulting me. Pay me in just one check – MY PAY CHECK!”

Watch Karen’s testimony at: www.atu.org or on the Local 689 web site at: www.atulocal689.org/videos
Recognizing the destructive impact of free trade agreements on working families, ATU has joined all of Labor in its fight against a fast track free trade bill that would establish a process that allows no amendments and limited debate in the U.S. Congress on international trade agreements negotiated by the president.

Fast track passage would let President Obama railroad through three job-losing trade treaties, led by the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) agreement with 11 other Pacific Rim nations. Several of those nations, notably Vietnam and Brunei, feature impossibly low wages, extensive worker repression, or both.

**Creates unbalanced system**

“Fast track’ is just another name for the corrupt and undemocratic process that has been used to ram destructive trade deals through Congress; deals that have led to a systematic elimination of good jobs, have devastated our communities, and degraded our standard-of-living for the last 30 years.

Fast track legislation allowed the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the Korea Free Trade Agreement (KFTA) to be quickly passed through Congress with weak labor and environmental side deals. NAFTA and KFTA resulted in the loss of nearly 800,000 jobs and the closing of countless factories.

Many years later, we find an unbalanced system in which profits soar even as workers take home a diminishing share of the national income.

Labor’s strategy to battle fast track will be to pick key congressional districts where unions and their allies, notably in the environmental movement will mobilize for fair trade. A vote is expected in late February or early March.

This is the latest scheme concocted by the wealthy elite to line their pockets at the expense of the middle class.

**Shrouded in secrecy**

The trade deals the fast track authority would affect are shrouded in secrecy. The bill doesn’t give the public any opportunity to improve a bad deal. Indeed, it doesn’t even require that Congress or an independent body evaluate the trade deal to ensure it has a positive impact on the U.S. trade balance, job creation or environmental protections before the fast track procedures apply – every deal, no matter how bad, is entitled to the same preferential treatment. If passed, the bill would:

1. Keep the very low congressional “standards” that allowed weak trade agreements like NAFTA to pass;

2. Keep the negotiating process behind closed doors, subject to too much Wall Street and special interest influence;

3. Ensure that irresponsible corporations remain unaccountable for labor and environmental violations anywhere in their supply chain.

“ATU will be joining with all of Labor to fight with vigor the president’s and Congress’s fast track and free trade legislation which would do more to hurt working Americans than his progressive programs could do to help,” says International President Larry Hanley.
International Vice President
Bill McLean retires

International Vice President Bill McLean retired in January, after serving ATU members in that office since his appointment in 2002. He was elected to that post at the International Convention in 2004, and was re-elected at every subsequent Convention until his retirement.

McLean worked his way through graduate school by driving extra-board for Santa Clara Transit.

He graduated with an associate’s degree in mathematics, and bachelor’s and master’s degrees in history.

He chose the bus

After McLean completed his studies, he had a choice between starting as an associate professor for $9,000 per year, or driving a bus full-time for $12,000. He chose the bus.

McLean became active in Local 265-San Jose, CA, after the new propane buses they were driving at the time regularly started catching fire. He and other members demanded safe vehicles.

He was elected local executive board member in 1977, secretary in 1984, and president in 1988, where he built a strong and successful local union.

He then chose to stay involved, leading to a 38 year career helping ATU members throughout the U.S. and Canada.

ATU, riders organize around transit

ATU is having great success in mobilizing members and riders to fight for more, better and safer transit across the U.S. and Canada. With events such as May Transit Action Month, the Fund Transit Rally in DC, and the Year of Transit Action campaign there has been a growing movement demanding change for public transit and working families.

Coalitions

One example is in Pittsburgh where ATU members helped establish Pittsburghers for Public Transit (PPT). Founding PPT member Alicia Williamson writes in a recent blog about the importance of coalitions working together to fight rampant layoffs, service cuts, fare hikes, and privatization while building solidarity among the working people who operate and use transit:

“ATU has become an increasingly progressive and activist union in recent years,” writes Williamson. “Worker coalitions organizing locally can help build the cultural movements we need to initiate systemic changes and strengthen public control of resources that are crucial to more sustainable and equitable futures.”

In 2015 ATU will continue its push for more, better, and safer transit, while working for social, environmental, and economic justice, all of which are invariably linked with our cause. Read her full blog at: http://bit.ly/1Dtz4dU

The ATU International Field Mobilization Department can help your Local in this work. The IU also trains local officers to arrange these coalitions.

Alicia Williamson from Pittsburghers for Public Transit

‘Like’ us on facebook
www.facebook.com/ATUInternational
Forging a worker-rider alliance in ‘Electric City’

A similar scheme had been uncovered earlier in neighboring Luzerne County. In that case, PennDOT sought to prosecute two managers, and the state reclaimed the fraudulent funding by tapping into LCTA’s reserves.

Solution: Crush transit riders, workers

COLTS, however, lacked such financial reserves. A new management team cooperated with PennDOT to devise a plan to repay the state $5.7 million by crushing riders and transit workers alike.

Six bus routes were to be eliminated, and several others were to be shortened or rerouted. Thirteen bus operators stood to lose their jobs.

Adding insult to injury, the state had no plans to hold the former COLTS managers accountable. You read that right: rather than investigate the culprits, PennDOT wanted working families to pay for management’s crimes.

Local 168 – a 115-year old Local Union with fewer than 80 members – did not wait for the hammer to drop. Using skills they learned at ATU trainings and the connections they have made as community members, local officers like Local President Mark Gifford, the Local 168 executive board, and rank-and-file members like Bob Lesh quickly mobilized members and riders to oppose the cuts.

How they fought back

First, they went online to gather phone numbers for local elected officials, put them on a leaflet with a short message to the public about the proposed cuts,
and began leafleting riders along the routes and at major hubs. Soon, concerned riders joined them.

✓ **Second,** they launched a petition to oppose the cuts and began gathering signatures from riders. Concerned riders began collecting signatures on their own. Within just a few weeks, the combined effort yielded more than 6,000 signatures.

✓ **Third,** through a word-of-mouth campaign, they mobilized community members, passengers, and the press to attend COLTS’ public meetings. Hundreds of people participated, all strongly opposing a plan that they said would cost them their jobs, their health, and their only means to get around their city.

The enormous outcry resulted in a series of favorable press reports and spurred a team of elected officials to travel to Harrisburg to meet with PennDOT. In December 2014, PennDOT agreed to revisit the repayment proposal.

**Routes and jobs still intact, but Local not waiting around**

COLTS riders still have their routes and drivers still have their jobs, all thanks to a few committed union and community volunteers who sounded the alarm when they saw the devastation that lie ahead.

As of press time, PennDOT and COLTS are currently in talks to extend the repayment window and permanently eliminate the threat of cuts or layoffs. But Local 168 and its riders aren’t waiting around. They are forming a joint committee to plan more actions and ensure that riders and workers aren’t punished for the crimes of a few corrupt managers. ✤

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**Winnipeg local gives legislators hands-on appreciation of transit work**

Local **1505-Winnipeg, MB,** has taken legislator “ride-alongs” a step further by providing local officials with a closer look at what it takes to be a transit worker.

Kevin Lamoureux, Liberal MP of Winnipeg North, got a behind-the-scenes look at maintenance work at Winnipeg Transit’s Fort Rouge garage. Lamoureux previously had gone on a bus ride-along with Local President John Callahan earlier in 2014 (photo).

On the facility tour, Callahan showed how things have changed over the years, from the past, when blacksmiths used coal forges to make mechanics’ tools to the ongoing rebuilding of every aspect of a bus.

**Councilor behind the wheel**

City Councilor Mike Pagtakhan from Point Douglas, also got a tour of the Fort Rouge facility, and actually learned what it’s like to be behind the wheel of a 40-foot bus (in controlled conditions on the property of course). He experienced how it feels to drive inches beside a loader – without having to worry about picking up passengers or traffic. The Local says he now has much added respect for the operators of Local 1505. ✤
Did you see the story about Detroit’s city workers voting to accept the pension adjustment offered by the City in their collective bargaining contract? If you did you probably thought that the deal offered to the members of Local 26-Detroit, MI, wasn’t great, but it could have been a lot worse.

Problem was – it was a lot worse, but nobody knew it at the time. The majority of Detroit’s public service union members accepted language in their latest contracts that committed them to accepting whatever the city’s U.S. bankruptcy judge decided regarding their pension.

The ‘grand bargain’

They did so believing that ratifying that language represented an acceptance of the “grand bargain” proposed by the city’s emergency fund manager at the time which would reduce future retiree pension payments by 4.5%; replace retiree health care with Medicare for retirees older than 62, and a health care stipend of $125 per month for those under 62; and eliminate cost-of-living allowance (COLA) increases.

ATU advised members to vote ‘No!’

It’s worth noting that Local 26 never trusted the deal, and advised its members to vote “No!”

The Local’s fears were borne out when the bankruptcy judge later also decided to plunder workers’ optional annuity funds in addition to their regular pension.

The original annuity fund deal gave workers the option of investing 3%, 5%, or 7% percent of their wages in the fund. The employees were guaranteed no less than 7.9% return on their investment, and more if the fund earned more.

The judge decided that public employees should not have been guaranteed 7.9% return on their money, and should never have earned anything above that.

So it was decided that the City would “claw-back” the “excess” money it had already paid out.

Retirees plunged into poverty

Some retirees with rolled over accounts received bills for over $100,000. The City simply took the money out of the accounts of those whose money was still invested in the annuity fund.

With the average Detroit General Retirement System recipient receiving only $19,000 per year, at least 20% will be pushed below the poverty level. The deal once known as “the grand bargain,” is now being called “grand larceny.”

ATU and the other public union retirees are not going to allow this to happen without a fight.

A group called the Detroit Active and Retired Employees Association (DAREA) filed an appeal of the bankruptcy judge’s decision with U.S. District Court Senior Judge Bernard Friedman.

A lot at stake

ATU members like all public workers have a lot at stake in the outcome of this legal challenge, because it is being viewed as a model for other cities and states to follow in robbing pension money from their own workers while giving larger tax breaks to those who don’t need them.

Artwork saved!

While Detroit is cutting pensions and driving workers and retirees into poverty, the City is holding artwork estimated to be worth between $2.7 – $8.5 billion. Current and retired city employees are wondering why at least some of that art couldn’t have been leased to other cities to restore the pension.
St. Louis, MO, Metro Call-A-Ride operator Lamont Moore, who helped rescue a toddler and an adult from an apartment fire, was recognized November 21, for his bravery at the Bi-State Development Agency Board of Commissioners meeting.

On October 26, Moore had just finished dropping off a Metro Call-A-Ride customer and was getting ready to take his break, when he noticed black smoke in the air. He followed the smoke and saw an apartment building on fire.

He could see people trapped in a second floor apartment. Flames were blocking them from getting out the only door.

Moore instructed a woman to climb out feet first, and then hang from the windowsill before letting go and falling to the ground. With the help of another bystander, he broke her fall and got her to safety.

Catches toddler thrown to safety

The Local 788 member then saw a man holding a toddler at the same window. He told the man he would catch the child. The man dropped the 2-year-old boy and Moore caught the toddler. Moments later, someone arrived with a ladder and got the man out of the burning building. The fire department arrived shortly thereafter.

After everyone was safely out of the burning apartment, Moore looked at his watch and saw that his break was nearly over, so he drove off to pick up his next passenger.

Retired Canadian IVP Arthur Burke passes

Retired International Vice President Arthur H. Burke passed away recently in Canada. Burke was first appointed an international vice president in 1971, and was elected at the following International Convention. He was re-elected IVP at every subsequent Convention until his retirement in 1983.

When he was appointed, Burke was serving as vice-president of Local 113-Toronto, ON, a position he had filled for four years. Prior to his election as local vice president in 1967, he served as the shop steward for the “interurban group” from 1956 to 1959, when he was elected a board member – an office he held until he was elected local vice-president.

Born in Kearney, ON, Burke at 18 joined the Royal Canadian Dragoons and served during World War II in Italy, France, Germany, and Holland. Upon leaving the service, he took employment at Gray Coach Lines, a subsidiary of the Toronto Transit Commission, as a driver in the interurban service. He joined Local 113 in 1946.

Burke served as president of the National Canadian Regional Conference and the Canadian Council during his years as international vice president.

Art Burke was a true ATU man who attended many international events and Conventions during his retirement. The international staff will miss his supportive presence.
Another Cleveland bus driver attacked

Attacks on Cleveland, OH, bus operators have hit epidemic proportions as another driver has been brutally assaulted.

This latest incident involved two passengers violently hitting the driver after they boarded the bus. The driver suffered cuts to his face and was taken to a nearby hospital for treatment. The attackers fled and have not been apprehended.

In the past few months alone, four teenagers were arrested and accused of pummeling a driver with a sock filled with rocks. Another driver was robbed at gunpoint. There have been 14 documented attacks on members of Local 268 through the end of August and more since.

ATU continues to demand that transit agencies address this issue for the safety of both drivers and riders.

Halifax Transit workers sound alarm after latest gun scare

Violent attacks on transit workers are making headlines across North America almost daily. Halifax, NS, transit workers have been expressing serious safety concerns since the arrest of a man who allegedly boarded a city bus with a loaded gun.

It’s the second incident in the last few months and Local 508 President Ken Wilson is calling for immediate changes to toughen up security on buses for the safety of drivers and riders alike.

Wilson says transit drivers are as vulnerable as police officers and home care workers, who are routinely placed in unpredictable and often difficult situations in their line of work.

Local 1433: ‘Are bus drivers’ lives worth $2,200?’

Assault against bus drivers is a crime, but it’s also an unrecognized social phenomenon that is occurring in cities and towns around the world. The violence seems to grow as the heralded end of the recession and income inequality leaves millions worse off than they were eight years ago.

Too many transit agencies and private operators have been slow to do anything about the problem.

That’s what Local 1433-Phoenix, AZ, has concluded after two recent violent attacks on their members.

In the first incident a would-be rider pummeled a 67-year-old driver with a skateboard when he was asked for the correct fare. In the other, a driver was punched 20 times.

‘They don’t know what to expect’

Local President Bob Bean says his drivers are under attack every day. “They don’t know what to expect,” he says. “When they tell somebody, ‘You’re short 25 cents, I can’t give you a pass,’ they don’t know whether they’re going to get hit, spit on, kicked or a soda thrown in their face.”

Bean is pushing for harsher sentences for convicted assailants, and protective shields.

He estimates each shield would cost around $2,200 to install, and asks, “What it comes down to is, are these drivers’ lives worth $2,200?”
Transit improves income, reduces unemployment in NYC

Public transit is New York City’s crucial equalizer in matters of housing, income and employment.

That’s the conclusion of New York University’s Center for Transportation and Management, which just published a report on the impact of access to public transit.

The Center found that of the 177 NYC neighborhoods studied, those with the best access to public transportation had the highest median household income and the lowest unemployment rate.

The study reveals that areas with the lowest transit access have lower median incomes and slightly lower unemployment. But over 50 percent of the people in these neighborhoods commute by car – giving them access to more jobs.

Somewhat surprisingly, areas that have a little access to transit have the lowest income, and the highest unemployment rate.

Why do neighborhoods with some public transit do worse than areas that have even less? The answer is the automobile.

Fewer people in the last group drive, and more rely on the limited public transit options available to get to work. That restricts the jobs available to them, as well as their economic mobility.

In other words, the more jobs you can reasonably commute to within an hour, the more job opportunities you’ll have, the more secure your job will be, and the greater your wages will be.

To read the full report go to: http://bit.ly/1AiQLPO

More transit = more jobs

Spending on transit generates more jobs than spending on highways, according to a new report, More Transit = More Jobs, published by the Transit Equity Network (TEN).

Based on data from 20 metropolitan areas, this study shows that the proportion of total transportation dollars spent on transit varies from 15 percent to 75 percent.

Metropolitan areas that give a higher priority to transit generate more jobs per dollar spent on transportation.

If our 20 metropolitan areas shifted 50 percent of their highway funds to transit, they would generate 1,123,674 new transit jobs over a five-year period – for a net gain of 180,150 jobs over five years – without a single dollar of new spending.

If federal spending on transit increased as proposed by Transportation for America and TEN, it’s estimated it would create 1.3 million jobs over the life of the law, and almost 800,000 more jobs than under present federal transportation law (SAFETEA-LU).
Do union members have more fun?

Hard to say, but one thing seems clear from a new study by professors at Baylor and the University of Arkansas – union members are definitely happier than non-union workers.

In Labor Union Membership and Life Satisfaction in the United States researchers ask whether “being a member of a labor union might increase quality of life compared to not being a member,” particularly in areas such as, “…having greater satisfaction with one’s experiences while working, feeling greater job security, being afforded numerous opportunities for social interaction and integration, and enhancing the participatory benefits associated with more engaged democratic citizenship.”

The study shows that “the substantive effect of union membership on life satisfaction is large… across demographic groups.”

Moreover, the study concludes, “The degree to which workers are organized in a society and are able to collectively bargain with their employers can have profound effects on social and political arrangements.”

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**Depression highest among transit workers**

*In Transit* readers know that transit workers have more job stress than those in any other occupation, and that they suffer the highest rates of some health problems in the workforce. Now comes word that transit workers suffer from depression at a rate higher than those in any other profession.

A new study reveals that 16.2 percent of transit workers suffer from clinical depression. The average of the 55 occupations studied was 10.45 percent.

The results were tabulated from data received from 214,000 western Pennsylvanians. While the authors acknowledge that the study’s conclusions are based on information from just one area, their findings align with reports from other studies conducted over the last 50 years.

**What is clinical depression?**

WebMD describes clinical depression in this way:

Most people feel sad or low at some point in their lives. But clinical depression is marked by a depressed mood most of the day, particularly in the morning, and a loss of interest in normal activities and relationships – symptoms that are present every day for at least two weeks. In addition, symptoms can include:

- Fatigue or loss of energy almost every day
- Feelings of worthlessness or guilt almost every day
- Impaired concentration, indecisiveness
- Insomnia or hypersomnia (excessive sleeping) almost every day
- Markedly diminished interest or pleasure in almost all activities nearly every day (called anhedonia, this symptom can be indicated by reports from significant others)
- Restlessness or feeling slowed down
- Recurring thoughts of death or suicide
- Significant weight loss or gain (a change of more than 5% of bodyweight in a month)

Transit workers, in particular, should know that depression is high in their line of work, and that there is no shame in seeking professional help.
Buses matter – NYC plan needs improvement

Full funding of New York’s MTA Capital Plan matters less than correctly funding the projects that matter argue Local Presidents Mark Henry, 1056-Flushing, NY, and John Lyons, 1179-New York, NY. The local presidents are responding to proposals in the MTA Transportation Reinvention Commission Report published late last year.

“Calling for funding the plan without regard for what it includes makes little sense,” explains Henry whose Local represents drivers and mechanics who work for MTA at New York City Transit’s Queens Bus Division.

Plan still fails

“Frankly, the plan still fails to adequately provide for current and future needs of Queens public transit; this especially relates to public bus transit,” insists Lyons, whose Local represents bus operators, mechanics and supervisors.

Too many old, deteriorated, inefficient buses

“Queens lacks sufficient buses to meet existing and planned service needs,” Henry notes. “The current fleet of buses in Queens includes too many deteriorated, old, and inefficient buses that operate beyond their expected useful life and often disrupt service.”

“Let’s face the facts,” asserts Lyons, “the current transit administration knows it will not be building any train services in Queens. ATU will continue to advocate a better scheduled service for Queens and so should all concerned about the state of public transit.”
ATU to Lima Conference: Transit key to fighting climate change

As the critical 2015 world climate talks in Paris near, global climate negotiators met in Lima, Peru for the 20th Conference of the Parties to plan the transition from fossil fuels. And ATU was there to talk about the importance of public transit and workers in this fight.

Stronger social protections are needed in this transition from fossil fuels. ATU told negotiators that Labor must be part of planning the transition, and not solely corporations. It is the only thing that will protect vulnerable communities from greedy corporate decision-making.

ATU also urged increased public transportation worldwide; pointing out it is one of the best ways to fight climate change because it reduces carbon emissions while creating jobs.

ATU backs international campaign to end workplace violence against women

At least one in three women worldwide, according to recent estimates, will be sexually assaulted, physically beaten or otherwise abused in their lifetime. Violence against women occurs everywhere – even at the workplace.

That’s why the ATU is calling on all nations to support the International Labor Organization Convention on gender-based violence, in order to spread awareness about the disturbing problem and help end assaults against women and all workers worldwide.

Zero tolerance

“No one should feel threatened while working to provide for their families. All countries must have a zero tolerance policy on violence against women,” says ATU International President Larry Hanley. “The ATU strongly urges all nations to support the ILO convention. This would be a strong step in ensuring that women and all workers feel safe and protected from abuse and intimidation at work.”

There’s a big wide world out there, and it’s tough to keep up with all the events which can affect your profession and your livelihood. One of the easiest ways to stay informed is by visiting: www.atu.org.

The old adage “a picture is worth a thousand words” is certainly true. Throughout the years ATU’s *In Transit*, and more recently the ATU website and Facebook page, have featured incredible photos of ATU members on the job, rain or shine, or snow; at protests; rallies; and other events; as well as captivating shots of buses, railcars, riders, and public transit in action.

Now, we want to give our members and retirees a chance to capture the images that show what makes the ATU the great union it is today, the pride and dedication our members have for their jobs, and the important role public transit plays in our communities.

So grab your camera or smart phone and start taking photos for the first-ever ATU photo contest. Contest rules and details are below.

**Deadline: June 30, 2015.** Prizes will given out for 1st Place, 2nd Place, 3rd Place and Honorable Mention.

### PHOTO CONTEST RULES

1. The contest is open to active and retired ATU members only. The person submitting the photograph must be the person who took the picture. Members may enter more than one photo.
2. International officers and staff are not eligible.
3. Photos can be submitted as digital files as large as possible, but at least 300 dpi, in color or black and white. The preferred print size is 8x10. For more guidance on electronic photo sizes, go to www.atu.org. Click on the Photo Contest button for the “Contest Rules and Photo Guidelines.”
4. The ATU reserves the right to use the photos submitted for contest.
5. Photo entries must have an ATU theme of some sort — such as ATU members at work, engaged in a union-related activity, rally, action, protest or images of the public transportation industry or ATU.
6. If members are featured in the photo, they should be identified. If large groups are pictured, the name of the group, or the purpose of the gathering (e.g. a protest, training, rally, union meeting, etc.) can be submitted in place of individual names.
7. Photos previously published in ATU publications or the website are not eligible for submission.
8. Entries must be made through the photo contest application on the ATU website at www.atu.org or mailed with the form below to ATU at:

   **ATU Photo Contest**  
   5025 Wisconsin Ave., NW  
   Washington, DC, 20016

9. ATU International will select finalists and post them on www.atu.org for final judging by the public. The winners will be featured in an upcoming issue of *In Transit*, the ATU website, social media and other publications.
BC members rally in support of dispatcher, public management, plebiscite

Members of Local 1724-Vancouver, BC, and the HandyDART Riders Alliance wear pink shirts January 22, to show support for a local executive board member who was wrongfully fired.

(Photo: ADRIAN MACNAIR, theNOW)

Members of Local 1724-Vancouver, BC, and the HandyDART Riders Alliance rallied in support of an unjustly fired co-worker, a “yes” vote in the coming transit referendum, and against private management of the HandyDART paratransit service they operate.

The group wore pink “anti-bullying” T-shirts backing dispatcher and local executive board member, Kathy Dietrich, who was fired two weeks before Christmas after complaining to management about a bullying incident.

Local President Robert Chitrenky, charges that their private employer, MV Transportation, cares more about profits than its employees or the people they serve. That’s one of the reasons the Local wants to bring management of the paratransit service back into TransLink, the public transit agency.

‘Where’s that money going?’
Declining service is another issue. TransLink is paying $39 million per year for the service which some riders claim is going downhill.

Through a freedom of information request the Riders’ Alliance, found out that people with disabilities and seniors were denied HandyDART service over 42,000 times in 2013 – an eight-fold increase over four years.

“Where’s that money going?” asks Chitrenky. “It’s not being re-spent here.”

The Local is also urging Vancouver area residents to vote “yes” in the coming transit plebiscite, which would greatly improve transit in the region and increase the HandyDART budget.

Toronto drivers pulled between safety, schedule

Safety always comes first for transit workers, but unfortunately TTC drivers in Toronto are being pulled in two directions; simultaneously encouraged to drive safely while facing pressure to meet tight schedules.

Today, computers generate most public transit schedules. And computers don’t factor in weather, traffic, bathroom breaks, and other unforeseen circumstances that can affect a bus run.

“What happens is if they are operating ahead of schedule or behind schedule?” asks Local 113-Toronto, ON. “They’re usually contacted by a supervisor [via an] on-board communication device. They are asked why are they ahead or why are they late.”

Which is the priority?
Being off schedule can lead to a driver being called in for “counseling” or reprimanded through “progressive discipline.”

The Local is asking what is the TTC’s priority? Is it strict adherence to an impossible schedule or is it safety?

Obviously, if the transit agency’s first priority truly is safety, then some more humane decisions will have to be made to give operators adequate leeway to respond to the situation on the street in whatever way they find it.
IS YOUR GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE BEING USED TO TIE UP THE UNION?

VOLUNTEER TO BUILD AN ACTION-BASED UNION TODAY!
SUT : Un syndicat qui fait bouger les choses

Ces jours-ci, les membres du SUT ne perdent pas de temps. Nous respectons nos promesses :

- La formation prend de l’expansion et elle s’améliore. À travers le SUT, nos membres apprennent à faire davantage.
- Nous menons des campagnes à Las Vegas, Atlanta, Washington (DC), luttant pour les droits des membres.
- À Vancouver (Colombie-Britannique), nos sections locales font campagne pour un référendum visant à recueillir des fonds pour le transport en commun.
- À Winnipeg (Manitoba), cet In Transit rapporte la tenue de « Ride Alongs » des membres de la section locale 1505 avec les élus.
- En Ontario, la campagne contre la privatisation se poursuit.
- En Ohio, les sections locales préparent leur lutte pour le financement du transport en commun.
- En Alabama, nous élaborons une campagne pour le transport en commun afin de souligner le 50e anniversaire de l’arrestation de Rosa Parks dans un autobus.

Une étoile du SUT est la conductrice d’autobus Karen Reed qui, lors de la campagne de la section locale 689 des travailleurs du transport dans le secteur privé, s’est levée dans une église remplie de 850 militants pour raconter son histoire : bien qu’elle travaille 65 heures par semaine, elle est toujours sans-abri à cause du faible salaire qu’elle reçoit de First Transit, dans la capitale américaine. Son brillant discours au nouveau maire de Washington peut être visionné sur le site www.atu.org, sous vidéos. Voyez-la raconter l’impact sur les travailleurs et la privatisation dans le secteur des transports en commun.

À Scranton, PA, les membres de la section locale 168 ont fait un excellent travail d’organisation d’usagers et, grâce à ces usagers, ont réussi à empêcher des réductions de services et des licenciements. Je suis fier de l’énergie qui fuse de notre syndicat.

Alors que la formation se poursuit, nous rénovons notre propre centre de formation et, comme vous pourrez le lire dans ces pages, le Conseil exécutif a accepté ma recommandation de nommer notre campus en l’honneur de deux des meilleurs organisateurs dans l’histoire de nos deux pays : Rosa Parks et Tommy Douglas.

En lisant leurs histoires et en ressentant leur humanité, je suis sûr que vous vous sentirez le pouvoir de leur compassion envers leurs concitoyens. Les deux se sont battus pour la dignité des gens ordinaires, pour obtenir des soins de santé pour les Canadiens (Douglas) et des droits civils pour les Américains (Parks); ils ont fixé la barre pour nous tous.

Nous espérons que de nombreuses générations d’organisateurs communautaires et de travailleurs ressortiront de nos formations sur le SUT; nous constatons un grand succès dans l’organisation des nouveaux membres et des membres existants.

Enfin, nous sommes sur le point d’établir les Joint Industry Councils et, en même temps, consacrer plus de ressources à la sécurité de nos membres. La récente mort tragique de Jake Schwab, un mécanicien et membre de Erie, PA, section locale 568, nous met en face d’une réalité dont nous sommes obligés de prendre en compte. Trop de nos mécaniciens travaillent sans formation appropriée et sans procédures de sécurité adéquates.

Nous nous engageons à accroître nos campagnes de sécurité afin de former les mécaniciens et de les protéger contre les dangers, ainsi que protéger les conducteurs d’autobus contre les agressions.

Certaines sections locales ont intensifié leur lutte pour leur droit d’aller aux toilettes et leurs histoires présentées dans ce numéro soulignent le succès que votre section locale peut avoir. C’est encore une fois une question de dignité humaine fondamentale. Donc, dans l’ensemble, je peux déclarer avec sincérité et confiance que le SUT est, de plus en plus, un syndicat qui fait bouger les choses.

Veuillez visiter le www.atu.org pour de plus amples renseignements et les plus récentes nouvelles du SUT. ❖
« Nous choisissons d’aller sur la lune »


Cette vision a été formulée pour la première fois dans un discours prononcé par le président Kennedy, le 12 septembre 1962. En décrivant sa vision et son objectif, Kennedy a déclaré :


«... Pas parce qu’ils sont faciles

« Nous choisissons d’aller sur la lune durant cette décennie, ainsi que de réaliser d’autres objectifs, non pas parce que c’est facile, at-il dit, mais justement parce que c’est difficile, parce que cet objectif servira à organiser et à mesurer le meilleur de nos énergies et nos compétences, parce que ce défi est celui que nous sommes prêts à accepter, que nous ne sommes pas disposés à reporter et que nous avons l’intention de gagner. »

Bill Gates avait une vision lorsqu’il a fondé Microsoft. Il a vu une avenue pour exploiter la puissance des gros ordinateurs, qui occupaient une pièce entière, et l’intégrer dans des ordinateurs plus petits : les ordinateurs de bureau. Alors que plusieurs doutaient de la vision de Gates, son objectif s’est concrétisé.

Steve Jobs avait aussi une vision lorsqu’il a démarré Apple. Il croyait qu’il pourrait amener la réussite de Microsoft un peu plus loin. Pourquoi être lié à un bureau pour obtenir de l’information? Pourquoi être attaché à un mur pour faire un appel téléphonique? Jobs a pris les ordinateurs de nos postes de travail et les a mis dans nos poches.

Ces innovateurs avaient une vision et comprenaient la valeur de l’établissement d’objectifs et de suivi. Leurs réalisations n’ont pas été faciles. En fait, leurs visions se sont concrétisées, comme certains pourraient le dire, contre toute attente.

La vision du SUT

Lors de notre dernier congrès, les délégués de votre section locale et d’autres ont approuvé une vision et un plan pour faire avancer notre SUT. Le congrès est l’aboutissement des discussions et des interactions du président Hanley avec les agents locaux menant à une vision et à l’élaboration ultérieure d’un plan d’action permettant d’établir un objectif tangible.

Jusqu’à présent, nous avons atteint un certain succès, mais il reste beaucoup de chemin à parcourir et ne pouvons pas permettre de s’asseoir sur nos lauriers.

Nous choisissons de le faire, comme l’a dit le président Kennedy, “non pas parce que c’est facile”. Non, nous le faisons parce que, peu importe à quel point les obstacles peuvent nous sembler insurmontables, nous devons le faire si nous voulons rester fidèles à nos valeurs et notre engagement à offrir un meilleur service pour nos passagers, une vie meilleure pour ceux que nous aimons et pour ceux qui nous succéderont.

Une vision, cependant, est seulement un rêve jusqu’à ce que les gens se réunissent pour en faire une réalité. C’est là que vous intervenez. Nous avons besoin que vous vous joigniez à nous dans la grande œuvre que vous voyez décrite page après page dans ce magazine.

Personne ne peut nous arrêter si nous travaillons tous ensemble.

Veuillez visiter le www.atu.org pour de plus amples renseignements et les plus récentes nouvelles du SUT.

Ne pas « donner au diable plus que son dû »


Le climat politique ne semble pas très différent – du moins, du point de vue de ceux d’entre nous qui se battent pour les travailleurs et les transports en commun. Tout ce que nous entendons est « pessimisme et morosité ».

Oui, il est important de voir les choses clairement. Cela n’aide en rien de prétendre que les choses sont mieux que ce qu’elles sont réellement.
Ils ne sont pas invincibles

Mais, cela n’aide pas non plus de penser que les choses sont pires qu’elles ne le sont réellement; que les frères Koch, le TEA party et leurs amis anti-travailleurs dans les assemblées législatives américaines et canadiennes sont tout sauf invincibles – parce qu’ils ne sont pas.

Vous entendez des gens dire que les syndiqués ne s’impliquent pas dans l’action politique, car ils sont à l’aise et apathiques. Mais, je pense que beaucoup de gens restent à la maison parce qu’ils croient que peu de changements sont possibles à propos de l’injustice que nous combattons.

Beaucoup plus de nous que d’eux

Il me vient à l’idée une vieille expression : « Ne donnez pas au diable plus que son dû ».

Par cela, je ne veux pas dire que ceux qui s’opposent à nous sont des « diables ». Ce que je veux dire, c’est que oui, les choses sont difficiles en ce moment, mais nos adversaires ne sont quand même pas des géants tout-puissants qui mesurent 10 pieds et dont les idées ne pourront jamais être contrées.

Non, ce sont juste des gens qui ont beaucoup de pouvoir parce qu’ils ont beaucoup d’argent. Mais nous sommes beaucoup plus nombreux qu’eux et, croyez-moi, aucune force ne peut nous abattre si nous sommes unis et politiquement actifs – en d’autres mots, si nous faisons preuve de « solidarité ».

Il existe de nombreux exemples historiques de dirigeants qui ont accompli de grandes choses parce qu’ils ont refusé de croire que rien ne pouvait être fait pour contrer l’injustice qu’ils ont vécue dans leur vie. Des dirigeants comme Mother Jones, Tommy Douglas et le docteur Martin Luther King Jr., ont combattu alors que d’autres disaient que leurs missions étaient de la pure folie ou, pire encore, qu’elles étaient dangereuses.

Une raison d’espérer

Ils ont attiré des milliers à leur cause parce qu’ils ont donné l’espoir aux gens. En soulevant les foules, ils leur ont donné une raison de s’impliquer. Nous ferions bien de suivre leur exemple.

Alors, la prochaine fois que vous entendrez un bulletin de nouvelles sur l’inévitabilité de mauvaises choses qui se passent pour les travailleurs ou le transport en commun, ne le croyez pas.

Nous avons le pouvoir d’empêcher de mauvaises choses de se produire et d’accomplir beaucoup de bien. Mais pour cela, nous devons commencer à exercer ce pouvoir alors que nous sommes encore en hiver.

Rappelez-vous, peu importe le caractère froid, sombre et maussade de l’hiver, le printemps n’est plus très loin. Et le printemps, particulièrement ici à Washington, est absolument magnifique.

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In Memoriam

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ROBERT J VERKEST

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