“After 30 years of driving a bus... what’s left?”
See page 9
MISSISSAUGA MAKES PUBLIC TRANSIT AFFORDABLE FOR ALL

About 2,500 of Mississauga’s low-income residents will pay 50 per cent less for a monthly transit pass for six months as part of an ongoing pilot program. Recognizing affordable access to public transit gives residents with limited financial means a way to get to a job and community services, councillors unanimously approved funds to help design, implement and evaluate Phase 2 of Mississauga’s Affordable Transportation Pilot Program.

A BUMPY RIDE FOR NIAGARA FALLS TRANSIT CHANGES

Proposals to change bus service in Niagara Falls, ON, is part of the city’s 2016 operating budget deliberations, but transit workers and riders – the people most impacted - say the decisions are being made without their feedback. “We were simply told (the changes) were happening,” said Margaret Gilbert, president of Local 1582, representing the Niagara Falls Transit workers. “Our members want to work in collaboration with the city.”

One bus driver put it simply “drivers want to work for a better system, too. We want to look forward to the job every day”.

ATU CANADA REVEALS NEW LOGO

ATU Canada has unveiled a brand new logo for the newly-formed Canadian ATU organization. The winning logo was chosen by a vote of the ATU Canada membership from logos sent in by ATU Canada members. The winner was submitted by Randy McNally, a member of Local 107-Hamilton, ON.
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The federal government signed the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) in February and Canada is now locked into a two-year countdown to ratify the deal, despite the controversy surrounding it.

Canadian Labour Congress President Hassan Yussuff has written Trade Minister Chrystia Freeland providing a detailed list of Canadian unions’ concerns with the TPP, including the following major threats:

**Corporations get more power, workers largely unprotected**

Investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) is a provision in many trade agreements, which allows massive corporations to directly sue democratically-elected governments, in an unaccountable system separate from national courts, in order to protect and expand their profits.

While corporations are given more rights, workers’ rights remain almost totally unprotected under multinational trade agreements like the TPP.

**Massive job losses in auto industry**

In 2014, approximately 40,000 Canadians worked in motor vehicle manufacturing and another 70,000 in parts manufacturing. A study by Unifor found the TPP could lead to the loss of 20,000 jobs in the Canadian auto sector alone.

**Lower food safety standards**

The TPP makes it harder for the Canadian government to introduce new or maintain existing regulations such as safety standards, even when they are in the public’s interest.

Under the TPP, our ban on bovine growth hormone, and other regulations designed to protect consumers, could be challenged as a “trade barrier.”

**Higher prescription drug costs**

Canada already has the second-highest per capita drug costs in the world. The TPP gives even more monopoly patent protection to drug companies than they currently have, meaning it will take longer for Canadians to access cheaper, generic versions of drugs.

**Companies could prevent countries from fighting climate change**

By virtue of the TPP and previous trade agreements, government can no longer attach conditions to procurement contracts to foster local economic development or ensure environmental standards.

This restriction will likely mean that governments will not be able to maximize the job spinoff of large infrastructure projects, such as those that are expected in the fight against climate change. For example, the TPP would prevent a government from requiring local sourcing in order to foster green industry.

With ISDS, corporations will also be able to challenge the regulations required to fight climate change if they deem them to be unreasonable or unfair obstacles to carry on their business activities. As a result, the TPP will put a chill on governments taking the steps necessary to fight climate change.
Local officers lay out concerns prior to negotiations in Regina

“Transit isn’t a very high priority” for the City,” laments Local President Don Baker, 588-Regina, SK, pointing to recent cuts in funding – a charge the city’s transit director rejects.

But, the Baker, a 15-year Regina Transit veteran, explains that the city needs to buy more buses and build more time into route schedules to catch up with the growth and increased ridership taking place in the area.

Contract negotiations coming

The current contract between the Local and the City won’t expire until December, but Baker and Local Vice President Kevin Lucier are already making the case for changes their members would like to see in the future.

“Our scheduling that we give to the passengers is essentially our promise to the people. If we can’t maintain that bus on time, they’re not going to ride,” asserts Lucier.

As for the contract, Baker says, “We’re not asking for the moon, but we’re asking for what’s fair. That means increased wages to catch up with other jurisdictions.

Added part-time job needed to buy a house

“It’s not just about money,” Baker insists, “but it would sure be nice to get up to a decent wage where you don’t have to find a part-time job to be able to buy a house.”

The agency is also having trouble retaining good drivers. They blame the split shift (8 hours over the course of 14) that some have to work for the problem.

“That’s why we’re losing people,” says the local president. (20 – 25 operators per year).

Keeping mechanics

Keeping mechanics is also a problem in Regina just as it is at many other properties across the nation. The union thinks it would help to make the current wage “supplement” a permanent part of their regular wage.

“I’m afraid if we don’t get some of this stuff, the user’s going to suffer,” Baker worries.

It’s worth noting that the Local was forced to resort to a work-to-the-rule job action, and received a lockout notice before it reached an agreement in 2013.

Halifax Transit to provide discounted low-income riders passes

It’s taken two years, but it looks like Halifax (NS) Transit will offer a limited number of bus passes to low-income Haligonians during a six-month trial period sometime after April.

The pilot project will provide 500 bus passes for $39 per month to families making less than $31,000, or less than Statistics Canada’s low-income cut-off amount, which varies with family size.

The initial program, however, will not be available to the 13,000 people already receiving a transportation allowance from the Employment Support and Income Program, nor will it begin to address the restricted mobility of 34,000 municipal residents who fall below Statistics Canada’s poverty line.
Canadian unions are pleased that the federal government has tabled legislation to repeal controversial bills C-377 and C-525.

These bills were designed to weaken unions by forcing redundant and unreasonable financial reporting, and by making it more difficult for Canadians in federally regulated workplaces to join a union, respectively.

**Bill was attempt to undermine unions**

“This proves what we’ve been saying all along: that these bills were nothing more than an attempt to undermine unions’ ability to do important work like protecting jobs, promoting health and safety in the workplace, and advocating on behalf of all Canadian workers,” says Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) president Hassan Yussuff.

“We are pleased that this new government recognizes the importance of fair labour relations, and supports the role of unions in the workplace.

“Bill C-377 was pushed through Parliament by the last government in power despite loud opposition from many different groups… We commend Minister Mihychuk for her leadership in repealing this legislation and restoring a balanced labour relations framework for federal workers,” he says.

**Pension Plan Disability failing most vulnerable Canadians**

Canada’s Auditor General Michael Ferguson recently released a damning report on the state of the Canada Pension Plan Disability (CPPD) program. Among the findings:

- More than half (57%) of Canadians who initially applied for CPPD benefits in the 2014-15 fiscal year were denied.
- Canadians who appealed their denial of benefits had to wait on average for almost 2 ½ years – or more than twice as long to get a decision under the Social Security Tribunal (SST) than the previous system.
- The SST was set up under the Conservatives and has been a disaster. Since it was set up in 2013, backlogged appeals have grown to 10,871 cases.
- One in three Canadians who filed appeals to the SST in fact qualified for the CPPD benefits, even though they were denied at the first two levels of decision-making.
- Even terminally ill applicants found themselves waiting longer for a decision on benefit eligibility. Only 7% of terminally ill applicants had a decision within 48 hours in 2015.

“Many Canadians with long-lasting and severe disabilities are waiting for years to see if they can even access Canada Pension Plan Disability benefits. It’s a disgrace,” says CLC President Hassan Yussuff. “The CPPD program needs to be fixed. Canadian workers should not be forced through an arduous application process and years of appeals to get the help they need when they need it most.”
Edmonton passes rules for on-demand, app-based operators

“Convenient”, “innovative”, “inexpensive” – these are words that advocates often use to extol the virtues of on-demand, app-based transportation services such as Uber and Lyft. However, opponents, particularly taxicab drivers, are more apt to use words like “disruptive”, “predatory”, and “illegal” to describe these new mobile device dependent operations.

The Edmonton, AB, City Council is attempting to address these concerns head-on with a by-law that took effect March 1, and only time will tell if the new legislation will actually level the playing field between the new services and taxis.

The outcome will have significance for public transit agencies and their workers as well – as crowd-sourced private transit companies such as Bridj essentially rely on the same technology and business model as these private transportation providers (PTPs).

Complex

The issue is complex. On-demand services threaten to put traditional transportation properties out of business, even as they exploit their own drivers by lowering fares without decreasing the commissions they must pay to make their vehicle available on mobile devices.

The by-law will allow taxis and PTPs to operate under the following rules:

- Only traditional taxis will be allowed to pick up street hails or fares waiting at taxi stands.
- Ride-sharing drivers can only arrange to pick up customers through an app.
- No vehicle-for-hire can operate without provincially approved commercial insurance.
- All vehicles for hire must charge a minimum of $3.25 per trip.
- Rates above the $3.25 minimum can be negotiated between the PTP or taxi, and the customer.

Under the new law, drivers have to provide the city with proof of the proper insurance and class of driver’s licence.

Criminal record checks and an annual vehicle inspection by licensed garages and mechanics are also required. Fines for operating without a city driver’s licence or city vehicle licence will be $5,000, and regular enforcement of unlicensed vehicles for hire will continue.

Uber is happy with the new regulations, which essentially legalized their Edmonton operation. But, Pascal Ryffel, spokesperson for the “Driving for Equality Campaign”, says, “This bylaw is essentially exactly what Uber has asked for since the beginning.”

‘Shame! Shame!’

The taxi drivers who crowded into the session in which the new law was passed were not appeased. They disrupted the proceedings with their own loud objections, and shouted, “Shame! Shame!” as they were ordered out of the council room.

The new by-law requires the Council to revisit minimum and maximum PTP and taxi fares six months from now. So the city will be able to evaluate the effectiveness and fairness of the new rules.

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Silver Spring, MD – Pointing to the urgent need for a candidate who fights for working families; who stands up to Wall Street and the billionaire class, who will break with politics as usual, the Amalgamated Transit Union General Executive Board voted in March to endorse Senator Bernie Sanders for President.

“The sincerity of Bernie Sanders and his long standing fidelity to the issues that are so important to working people are what convinced us that standing with Bernie is standing with the 99% of America that has been left out of the mainstream public debate, cheated out of jobs and denied the true meaning of the American dream,” said ATU International President Larry Hanley in making the announcement.

“His unabashed support of civil rights, public services, free tuition at public colleges, increases in Social Security and the minimum wage, make him an ideal candidate. But the labor movement owes Senator Sanders so much for his consistent opposition to right wing programs and his championing of first-rate healthcare for all – which is already the global standard,” Hanley continued.

ATU is recommending that members vote for Bernie in the primaries and caucuses that remain. The union also plans to mobilize members across the country in support of Sanders’ campaign.

“We reject the idea that these vital programs are unattainable and resent the notion that we as a country can afford unlimited and unquestioned expenses for war, but must withstand the “Tea Party Test” on every investment in our own people. The attempt to belittle what so many of us believe in and what Senator Sanders has brought to the national stage is antithetical to the progressive history of the Democratic Party.”

Hanley recalled the brave words of Robert F. Kennedy in South Africa in 1966 in announcing ATU’s support of Senator Sanders:

“‘There is discrimination in this world, and slavery and slaughter and starvation. Governments repress their people; millions are trapped in poverty while the nation grows rich and wealth is lavished on armaments everywhere. These are differing evils, but they are the common works of man. They reflect the imperfection of human justice, the inadequacy of human compassion, our lack of sensibility towards the suffering of our fellows. But we can perhaps remember – even if only for a time – that those who live with us are our brothers; that they seek – as we do – nothing but the chance to live out their lives in purpose and happiness, winning what satisfaction and fulfillment they can.’

“Today we remember those words and are proud to stand with the candidate who was arrested fighting for civil rights, had the judgment and courage to vote against a senseless war, stood up to the drug companies, the banks and Wall Street and remained loyal to the common struggling worker. In the spirit of Bobby Kennedy we ask our members to stand with Bernie Sanders.”

“This is no ordinary time in U.S. history and our nation is crying out for a leader who owes nothing to the corporate interests responsible for undermining the American middle class,” says Hanley. “Our executive board recognizes what’s at stake in this election and have made the bold decision of endorsing Bernie Sanders for President. Bernie is right for working people and right for America.”
Passion and maturity

The president called – my local president.
“Will you come to our 100th Anniversary Dinner next year?”
“Oh, of course I will, Danny…”

Next thing I know I’m sandbagged – I’ve been made a “guest of honor.”

This is not my thing; I mean the dinner is – but I don’t like being the “guest of honor” anywhere.

So, I went. What a great time I had seeing 700 friends and brothers and sisters at Local 726 on Staten Island who I worked side by side with for over two decades.

My Local was way rougher than yours

It was a refresher course in how important a union can be. This is a Local that had many internal battles, grudges, fistfights and other disruptions. So, here’s a shout out to our Locals with internal fights – my Local in the 1970s and ‘80s was way rougher than yours is today – trust me.

But the thing I’ve learned, and the lesson for all our members is this: The people who are most passionate in internal union fights – yes, even the ones you disagree with – usually care deeply about the union.

I have written about this before, about the internal bickering that prevents Local Unions from functioning. We sometimes look like a Republican presidential debate!

Couldn’t find any old grudges

But, back at Local 726, looking around the room I couldn’t find any of the old grudges left. We, as a generation of members had matured. We had realized that what separated us was much less important than what brought us together. We are after all, union.

The union, an old friend told me, is nothing but an idea. It’s not our buildings or our banners – our contracts or our or our connections or even our strikes. It’s the idea that we are better off together than on our own.

That power grows when you share it. That (you young folks have to trust me on this) twenty years from now when you look back on your life in the union, you will feel differently about that jerk who ran against you, or about the guy who made the crass remark about you at the union meeting. You won’t remember the guy who wrote about you in the rest room.

You’ll look around at what you achieved together, even while you were at each other’s throats with different opinions. You’ll chuckle about how old your friends look and how much hair they are losing.

You’ll either say, “we overcame our differences and made the world a better place,” or “I’m glad I got even with that guy!”

Think about the opportunity you have

So, think today about the opportunity you have in your hands, simply because you have a union to improve the lives of your family, your children and your community.

I know that looking back on the last 30 of Local 726’s first hundred years, our members knew at our celebration that we had done some great things, we built a rock solid Local, only because we found a way through a democratic union to be strong together, in solidarity. And the “guest of honor” part? It was an honor to sit there among the officers and members of a spirited local union, starting its’ second century of service to working people.

ON THE COVER:
Local 726 member Jim Marsh, after 30 years of driving a bus and his union involvement, you might think Jim needs help. But he and fellow 726ers grew together, helped each other and built a stronger Local Union.
The audacity to make things happen

JAVIER PEREZ, JR., INTERNATIONAL EXEC. VICE PRESIDENT

One of the things we always say about ATU is that we are a Union “that makes things happen.” By that we mean that we are a proactive labor organization that never stops fighting for improved wages, working conditions, and social justice for ourselves, and everyone in both of our countries.

However, stepping out to fight for those goals doesn’t come naturally to everyone. Members and even officers often think that they don’t possess the leadership skills necessary to make things happen. But, the research I have done on this subject reveals that almost anyone can develop those attributes, which include the following:

Leadership requires commitment to two things:

- Dedication to understanding yourself – understanding what it means to be human in this world.
- The ability to change one’s habits of thought: how you think, what you value, how you manage frustration, etc. Changing those habits means moving from non-leadership to a leadership mindset.

Attributes of a leadership mind

Tough choices are a daily requirement of leadership:

Managing polarity: “Polarity is inevitable in every aspect of life. We want to live – yet we must die. How can I fully devote myself to both family and career? Am I a boss or a friend? Paradoxes are a part of life. How we respond to them is what separates greatness from mediocrity.

The best leaders operate in four dimensions:

1. Vision: The visionary thinks new, thinks ahead, and is in touch with creative potential. The visionary sees what an ultimate positive environment would look like and builds a plan to achieve it. I’m reminded of the Robert F. Kennedy quote, “Some men see things and ask why? I dream things and ask why not.”

2. Reality: Reality is the opposite. The realist follows the motto, “Face reality as it is, not as you would like it to be.” The realist grapples with hard facts and perimeters. The realist masters the art of the possible, has no illusions, sees limits, and has no patience for speculation.

3. Ethics: Ethics refers to basic human values of integrity, love and meaning. This dimension represents a higher level of development, one not ruled by fear or pleasure – but by principle.

4. Courage: Courage exists in the realm of the will. It is fundamental to making things happen. Courage is essential in advocacy – the ability to take a stand and internalize personal responsibility and accountability.

The real challenge of leadership is to develop all of these often contradicting modes and behaviors at once.

Some people are more talented than others. Some more educated than others. But we all have the capacity to be great. Greatness comes when you recognize that your potential is only limited only by what you choose to do, how you use your freedom, how resolute and persistent you are – in short by your attitude. And we are all free to choose our own attitude.

The clock of life

“The clock of life is wound but once, and no man has the power to tell just when the hands will stop, at a late or early hour. Now is the only time you own.

Live, love, toil with a will. Place no faith in time. For the clock may soon be still.”

Koch brothers counting on you sitting this election out

The 2016 election campaign is now in full swing. Political pundits tell us that voters are angry, and that they’re expressing that anger by voting for “outsiders” in the presidential caucuses and primaries.

Americans have every right to be angry about the political obstructionism that has produced the least productive Congresses in history.

Some on the Right may see that as a victory, but most Americans don’t send their representatives to the nation’s capital just to filibuster legislation and block presidential appointments. They want them to do something.

Sanders and Trump

That’s why Senator Bernie Sanders, D-VT, and New York real estate magnate Donald Trump are doing better than anyone expected.

Sanders inspires tremendous enthusiasm with passionate calls for government to do something about the economic inequality that is pushing middle class Americans into the ranks of the working poor.

Trump has tapped into the frustration of people who blame politicians for the economic conditions that hold them back; people who want their elected officials to do something to “make America great again.”

At this writing, former Secretary of State and Democratic frontrunner Hillary Clinton is regarded as the “establishment” candidate in the race.

Senator Ted Cruz, R-TX, the Tea Party favorite, is Trump’s chief opposition.

Governor John Kasich, is hoping lightning will strike making him the Republican nominee, or at least give him enough delegates to play a role at the GOP convention.

Raw deal

They all say that workers in this country are getting a raw deal. And they all have plans to fix that by creating jobs and increasing the wages of Americans.

Your job as a citizen is to evaluate the candidates’ plans and make your own decision about which candidate will ultimately improve the lives of working families. ATU has endorsed Bernie Sanders, but ultimately it’s up to you.

The greatest tragedy of our American political system is that so many people don’t vote. Only 57.5 % of eligible citizens actually voted in 2012. 93 million eligible citizens stayed home.

The Koch brothers and all those who oppose unions and benefit from keeping your wages low are counting on you sitting this one out.

Don’t give them that satisfaction. If most union members in this country vote – our candidates will win. That’s why I’m asking you now to make sure you are registered and get involved in the political process.

Don’t wait until it’s too late.

Please visit www.atu.org for more information and the latest ATU news.
Bridj, Ford contracted to provide Kansas City transit service

Threatens ATU jobs

New “on-demand” app-based transportation companies like Uber and Lyft are disrupting traditional taxi operations around the world.

First public agency to provide app-based transit

According to The Verge technology website, “Ford, Bridj, and KCATA are pitching this project as the ‘first U.S. public-private collaboration [to] bring together a major U.S. transit system, an automaker, and an urban technology company to enhance existing mass transit.’”

This is part of Ford’s “Smart Mobility Initiative” that it has already tested on its own in several U.S. cities. General Motors has begun a similar program called “Maven.”

These projects have been created by Ford and GM as a hedge against the decreased profits they expect as a result of on-demand transit and declining Millennial car ownership.

On-demand public transit

But now, one of these companies, Bridj, has launched a pilot project with Ford Motor Company and the Kansas City, MO Area Transportation Authority (KCATA) that will extend the agency’s reach into areas that have had little or no transit service up ’til now.

The new service called “RideKC: Bridj” will operate a fleet of 10 locally manufactured Ford Transit vans to provide transportation to underserved regions of the Kansas City metropolitan area.

The company says that the project will utilize drivers who are working for KCATA in shuttle buses owned by the city. Whether or not those drivers will be ATU members is unclear.

The one fact that is clear is that the funds used for this service will be diverting money away from KCATA bus service that many in Kansas City rely on every day.

TransDev gets into the game

You might expect that multinational transit operators such as TransDev (Veolia), and First Transit would be left out in the cold if app-based transit begins to usurp the service they currently provide. But, it’s being reported that TransDev is about to sign a contract with the Hillsborough Regional Transit Authority in Florida to conduct a pilot project that will provide app-based, on-demand service for bus passengers from their home to a bus stop and from a destination bus stop to work — and vice versa — beginning this fall.

Sign of the times?

The Verge speculates that these services “could be a sign of the times for public transportation agencies, which are facing hundreds of billions of dollars in repairs while their taxpayer-funded budgets dry up.”

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What you may not know about Uber and other on-demand transit companies

If you are a transit operator in any major city in the United States or Canada you have doubtless heard about the new “transportation network companies” (TNCs) that provide service hailed through apps on smartphones and other mobile devices. Companies such as Uber and Lyft have become very popular providing this type of “on-demand” door-to-door service, which, most of the time, costs less than taking a taxi.

This, of course, has caused some serious disruption in the highly regulated taxicab industry. TNC drivers, for instance, have not yet been required to obtain “medallions” or hack licenses to pick up fares in metropolitan areas, which, among other municipal mandates, make taxi service more expensive.

In the beginning this was good news for on-demand operators who could make decent money providing this new convenient service to the public. But, the number of drivers has skyrocketed since then, reducing the amount of work available to each. As a result, it has become difficult, if not impossible for TNC workers to earn a living wage.

The driver you engage on your smartphone today will probably be a retiree, a part time worker, or possibly, even an ATU member doing on-demand work on their own time for extra cash.

This is all well and good, unless Uber or Lyft is your only source of income, or if you are a full-time driver in an industry that is being disrupted by an app-based hoard of part-timers.

‘Shame on Uber!’

Emotions have boiled over in New York where Uber is attempting to force Lyft out of business by lowering its fares 15 percent. Shouting “Shame on Uber!” a group of drivers recently protested the fare reduction, which has further reduced their income.

The protesters called for a strike to shut down the app-based service, but, with 35,000 driving for the company in the city, it would be something like herding cats to organize a job action against Uber in the Big Apple.

Of course, Uber and Lyft avoid unionization by claiming that they are only technology services, not a transit providers, making their drivers individual contractors rather than employees. However, Seattle’s city council didn’t buy that argument and passed a law allowing drivers for ride-hailing app companies to form unions.

ATU members may be asking, “What does this have to do with me?” And, that’s because they don’t know about outfits like Bridj – a company that offers private, high-end bus service via the Internet to urban commuters who don’t want to use public transit (see opposite page).

Paratransit

Also, Uber has been making inroads into paratransit – attracting the attention of communities seeking to reduce what they currently pay to provide service to the sick, seniors, and persons with disabilities.

Like Amazon.com, TNCs are widening their reach into a host of services they didn’t initially provide such as package delivery, and bringing auto repair and medical services to your door.

Some say that this trend is all part of a growing North American “gig” economy. No matter what you call it these new individually contracted service providers are already beginning to lower wages while enriching the lucky few who control the technology that a growing number of people need to find work.

ATU is evaluating this new app-based, on-demand transportation industry to determine what, if any, impact it might have on the employment of our members, and transit workers at large. We invite anyone working for app-based transportation providers, particularly ATU members, to get in touch with us. All communications will be held in strictest confidence.
In a big victory for Local 836—Grand Rapids, MI, a federal court dismissed the The Rapid’s appeal of two lower court rulings prohibiting the transit agency from interfering with the free speech rights of its ATU workers. According to the judgment The Rapid must pay the union’s legal fees associated with the case.

The judgment should end The Rapid’s illegal attempts to silence employees who protest the agency’s proposed termination of their pension plan, stalled contract negotiations, and fare increases that harm riders.

History of the case

In August the U.S. District Court for Western Michigan ruled that the agency could not interfere with peaceful leafleting by off-duty ATU members on Rapid property that is open to the public.

A second injunction, delivered last month, enjoined the agency from “prohibiting or interfering with [Local 836] and their members’ direct action protests in public streets in front of residences and businesses, and speech at public meetings of [The Rapid] Board of Directors, and from imposing discipline on persons for engaging in such activities.”

Abuse of power

“This is a big victory for Rapid transit workers and another blow to the agency’s besieged leadership demonstrating that they cannot trample on the Constitutional rights of their workers,” says International President Larry Hanley. “This judgment puts a stop to this abuse of power.”

The Rapid has been engaged in an aggressive campaign to silence their transit workers. Last November, The Rapid issued a new social media policy that workers say is meant to silence dissent online and again violates their Constitutional rights. Legal experts say the policy is so overbroad and open to interpretation that any complaints expressed on social media about The Rapid’s employment practices could be used to punish workers.

Local President Richard Jackson declares “We will continue our campaign and protest as long as it takes to protect our livelihoods and those of our neighbors and riders.”

Historic fare strike

The Court decision came a week after community activists staged a one-day fare strike led by United Students Against Sweatshops.

Outraged by growing threats against transit worker pensions and violations of workers’ First Amendment rights, a recent 16% fare hike, and a generous raise for the agency’s CEO, community activists led by the students boarded buses en masse, refusing to pay their fares.

In a leaflet handed out to bus drivers, the community coalition states: “The Rapid’s recent actions toward you and your riders is a form of economic violence that I won’t condone. Because it is illegal for union bus drivers like you to go on strike in Michigan, I am doing the closest thing that I can as a rider by engaging in this one-day fare strike.”

ATU WINS FIRST AMENDMENT VICTORY ON THE HEELS GRAND RAPIDS FARE STRIKE
Memphis Bus Riders Union fighting for transportation that ‘puts riders first’

Fighting for public transportation that puts bus riders first is no easy task, but that’s the goal of the Memphis Bus Riders Union (MBRU). And they accomplished a lot in 2015 with good, old-fashioned grass roots organizing.

MBRU joined forces with Local 713-Memphis, TN, meeting monthly to share concerns, strategy and fellowship between drivers and riders. Through these meetings MBRU and ATU have created a set of priorities that will guide their lobbying efforts. Together they are launching a campaign for increased operating funds from the city, filling the Memphis Area Transit Authority (MATA) deficit, as well as increasing mechanics, drivers and service, and increasing capital funds specifically for new buses, shelters and improved facilities for riders and employees.

So far, MBRU has:

✓ Won improvements to MATA’s most used bus facility, the North End Terminal, adopted by the MATA Board to be included in MATA’s FY 2016 budget.

✓ Pressured MATA to stop its “no sagging” policy used by security guards to racially profile and harass riders.

✓ Worked with students at University of Memphis and Southwest Community College to support the development of MBRU campus chapters to address the transportation needs of students and campus workers, while engaging students in dialogue around equitable public policy.

✓ Held film screenings, participated in transit workshops and spoken on panels at the 2015 Environmental Justice Conference and the Workforce To Work summit at University of Memphis.

✓ Joined a national effort of transit rider organizations, advocates and ATU to push for increased bus capital in the FAST Act transportation bill, and successfully lobbied their mayor and congressional representative to support the bill.

✓ Lobbied the mayor to secure increased city funding for MATA in the FY 2016 budget.

ATU Lincoln, riders win better public transit

After a joint comprehensive campaign with Local 1293-Lincoln, NE, and Citizens for Improved Transit to fight for expanded and improved bus service, the City Council voted to approve route changes to provide more efficient bus service and endorsed a plan to expand service. The workers and riders leafleted the public and flooded public hearings telling the council that the StarTran bus system needs more investment to serve people who cannot drive or afford a car, and to attract others to take a bus rather than drive. Now the Council is beginning a discussion on how to find money in their budget to fund the bus service expansion.

Louisiana Local, riders, allies push for more funding

With Louisiana state funding for public transit at an all time low, public transit riders, workers and advocates packed a public town hall meeting in Alexandria, LA, to demand legislation to increase investment in public transportation.

“Thousands of Louisianans in the City of Alexandria and across state rely on buses, trains and trolleys each day to get to work, school, the doctor and other daily tasks,” Local President Darnice Briggs, 981, told attendees at the town hall.
In January, a 67-year old woman was killed by a bus in a Bethesda, MD, crosswalk. Last November, a 70-year woman was killed by a bus while crossing a street in Brooklyn. These tragic accidents highlight the danger blind spots pose for bus drivers and pedestrians. ATU is calling on the motor coach industry to fix the problem.

Roughly one pedestrian is killed every 10 days by a transit bus in the United States. American buses have huge left hand mirrors mounted in critical sight lines, and wide “A” pillars (the column that secures the left side of the windshield to the driver’s side window) that needlessly obstruct drivers’ vision – particularly when making left turns.

In fact, over a dozen pedestrians may be hidden behind an “A” pillar and left hand mirror combination. Unlike European models, U.S. bus design doesn’t provide drivers with the unobstructed view necessary to avoid pedestrian accidents in urban areas.

‘These accidents do not have to happen’

“These tragic accidents do not have to happen,” says International President Larry Hanley. “Crosswalks are the industry’s ‘Achilles heel’ and the blind spots created by poor bus design are the reason why. Yet the industry continues to ignore the problem, unfairly blaming bus drivers who are often prosecuted for these preventable accidents.”

ATU met with the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) recommending the retrofitting of transit buses with low mounted, reasonably sized left side mirrors, and “A” pillars which allow operators, regardless of height, to easily see pedestrians crossing in front of the bus.

Bob and weave?

APTA rejected ATU’s position in a letter maintaining that the wide “A” pillar is “essential to the structural integrity” of buses and that operators should bob and weave in their seat – the “rock and roll” method – to see around these massive pillars and mirrors.

Typical operators, leaning forward as far as possible, are only capable of moving their eyes half the width of some obstructions and many simply cannot move freely around a huge steering wheel.

“We engineered safe buses over half a century ago, only to trade safety for higher profit and lower cost. Europe has safe buses now,” Hanley says. “The American public deserves no less today.”

Liability far exceeds cost of safe design

Despite the fact that the cost of liability far exceeds the cost of safe design, bus manufacturers – one of whom estimates the increase in build cost to eliminate blind spots would be under $300 per bus – continue to produce and sell these “massive mobile manslaughter machines” and the industry continues to buy them.

“These senseless tragedies could have been prevented and the solution is staring APTA and transit agencies right in the face,” asserts Hanley. “The American public deserves safety to come first, and until the industry demands a change in the design of buses to remove the unnecessary blind spots like European buses, people will continue to die in these preventable accidents.”
Over the past year ATU has taken historic steps to support and work in coalition with the disability community.

In Washington, DC, a coalition has formed calling for alternative paratransit contracts to require full accessibility, compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), worker benefits, fair wages, and career paths for paratransit workers.

In Maryland, paratransit riders and workers have come together to call for improved service for riders, respect on the job and better wages for the workers.

Carol Tyson, a disability justice advocate, who worked with our Local in Washington, DC offered the following “Do’s and Don’ts” to consider when reaching out to your own local disability community and raising these issues with your fellow local union members. We promise, it is worth every minute.

Don’t...

• Be surprised to find that people with disabilities are individuals. Just like transit workers, people with disabilities are represented across all races, classes, faiths, sexual orientations, genders, and political affiliations, and we don’t always agree with each other. We are a minority that anyone can join during their lifetime.

• Be surprised when we have common issues. Transit workers and disability community members may be concerned about the same things. We all want paid sick leave, and riders usually understand that better pay and working conditions for drivers and dispatchers will lead to better service.

• Assume that people with disabilities aren’t activists. Both workers and people with disabilities fight for justice. Workers still fight for labor rights. The disability community fights for our rights to live outside of institutions, for services that allow us to participate in the community, employment and good wages, accessible transportation, and basic protections through the ADA. Disability activists have their own organizing skills. We can be great allies.

Do...

• Accept that “ableism” exists. Approximately 54 million Americans and 3.8 million Canadians have at least one disability, making people with disabilities the largest minority in our countries. People with disabilities routinely face barriers to healthcare, transportation, education, employment, and housing, and experience higher rates of poverty, violence, and sexual assault.

• Become familiar with disability etiquette. Some language might be offensive (“people-first” language is good, the ‘R’ word and ‘handicapped’ are out); it’s good policy to ask before helping; talk to the person with a disability, not their aid or their interpreter; do not express pity or sympathy; treat us like the colleagues/comrades in the struggle that we are.

• Work to make meetings with the disability community as accessible as possible. Hold meetings in spaces with wheelchair accessible entrances and restrooms, and ask other coalition members what accommodations they might need.

• Ensure that all decisions are made together. Value the input of disability community members. “Nothing About us Without Us!” is our motto. Let that be your guide.

• Have hope! There may be tension between riders and workers at first, and it definitely takes time to build trust. Listen to the needs of the disability community. Once stories are shared, we are one step closer to solidarity.

We are stronger together. When we fight together and demand access for all in transportation, for fair wages and benefits, in addition to supports and services that allow us all to reach our full potential and contribute to our communities, we can win!
After a Louisville, KY, bus driver was brutally attacked by two teenagers who knocked out two of his teeth, Local 1447 is calling on the city to provide better protection for drivers and riders. At least a dozen assaults happen each month there with drivers being spit on, verbally assaulted, punched in the face, and suffering other violent attacks. “I don’t plan on coming to work to die,” says Local President Theo Hamilton, who called for bus shields and for city legislators to pass a bill with tougher penalties for people who attack transit workers.

“Drivers don’t really have a chance to really get the rest that they need. People think that driving a bus is, you’re just sitting there. No, it’s mentally challenging.” That’s how Local Vice President Mikki Easley, 1637—Las Vegas, NV, explained the problem that underlies many of the over-the-road bus accidents to a meeting of the Regional Transportation Commission. RTC is investigating a tragic accident in which a tourist was fatally struck by a Keolis Transportation America bus.

The Local argued Keolis drivers are routinely exhausted, emphasizing that drivers are forced to work on their days off, even if they don’t want to work the overtime, and that many drivers are afraid to tell their bosses when they’re tired because they’re afraid of being disciplined.

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ATU to Las Vegas RTC: ‘Drivers are routinely exhausted’

Louisville Local calls for greater protection of members

ATU loses Dallas hero in tragic accident

Zulita Walker, 1338—Dallas, TX, was tragically killed in a bus accident in February. Walker is credited with saving the life of a distraught man who was about to jump off a bridge just last October. Walker was driving her bus when she spotted a man who looked like he was getting ready to jump from an overpass. “You’ll be OK,” she told him. “Sometimes, everybody goes through some hard times, but it’ll get better.” She then invited the 21-year-old man on board her bus to talk until police arrived and even gave him a big hug and told him that she loves him. Our thoughts and prayers are with Walker’s family as we mourn the passing of this ATU hero.
Police on public transit

In response to a big increase in assaults on bus drivers, and an urgent request by Local 1505-Winnipeg, MB, last October, the city’s police board has approved a plan to place uniformed and plain clothes officers and cadets on the Winnipeg Transit buses.

Local President John Callahan says that there were 60 cases of operators being assaulted in 2015, compared to 39 the year before. And 10 were attacked in January alone.

In October, Callahan warned the police board, “There is almost a complete lack of respect out there for the transit system.”

In addition to assaults on drivers, Callahan said, there are drug deals and “grab-and-runs” going down on buses all the time, and the number of people not paying fares is growing. He believes that the presence of police on transit will reduce those numbers.

As an example, Callahan related an incident in February in which an undercover officer removed an unruly passenger from a bus. “It’s a great day,” he says.

Deputy Police Chief Dave Thorne says determining which routes to monitor at what times of day is “a work in progress.” They’ll use crime stats, and communication with Winnipeg Transit to pinpoint trouble spots, he explains.

“The important part here,” he says, “is [police and transit have] agreed to work together. That’s the good news, and we’ll figure it out as we go.”

City issues new Transit Code of Conduct

Transit customers in Winnipeg, MB, started noticing a new decal and sign on transit buses, stations and service centres in January as Winnipeg Transit began the rollout of a new safety initiative. The signs outline a new Transit Code of Conduct and the decals are reminding passengers of the consequences of threatening or assaulting transit operators.

“The goal of this public education campaign is to improve the safety and security of Transit employees and customers,” says Winnipeg Transit Director Dave Wardrop. “We are pleased to work with ATU Local 1505 in the development of this initiative.”

Most ATU members are all too familiar with the problems the code seeks to eliminate:

- Threats or assaults will not be tolerated;
- Riders must pay applicable fare and comply with all fare terms and conditions;
- No smoking, littering, spitting, vandalism, or graffiti;
- No consumption of alcohol, illegal drugs or inhalation of solvents;
- Do not disturb, annoy or interfere with any other person, includes loud, foul, insulting, abusive or inappropriate language;
- Do not place feet on bus seat, spill food or beverages or create any unsanitary condition;
- Any item which may cause an obstruction or unsafe condition is not permitted;
- No unlawful carrying of firearms or restricted weapons, explosive, flammable, or toxic material.

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More than a hundred Washington, DC, area transit riders with disabilities, MetroAccess paratransit workers, and faith leaders held a contentious gathering in February to tell Prince George’s County, MD, Executive Rushern Baker about the struggles they face relying on a crumbling paratransit service, and enduring dangerous working conditions.

“It’s totally unreliable, totally unreliable … I have been abandoned more times than you can imagine,” rider Gloria Jones Swieringa of Fort Washington, MD, who is blind, told the crowd gathered at a church outside the nation’s capital.

“WMATA wanted to cut costs, so they privatized MetroAccess. But how do you think that private company cuts costs? By lowering my wages,” says Genoa Greene, a MetroAccess driver for the past eight years. “We need to make changes as far as the drivers, clients, the dispatchers, it needs to be a better service.”

Bureaucratic nightmare

Since MetroAccess service was privatized, riders have endured a bureaucratic nightmare that requires trips to be scheduled at least 24 hours in advance, hours long rides to do simple errands, and deteriorating service.

Likewise, MetroAccess workers scrape by on poverty wages. Currently, the starting hourly rate for a MetroAccess driver is a mere $13.48. These low wages have led to retention problems and high turnover; the average worker has been on the job for only two to three years.

“The issues that workers and riders care about are inseparable, because disability rights and workers’ rights are inseparable,” says International President Larry Hanley. “When it comes to paratransit service, both the workers and riders are trapped in a system that every agency wishes didn’t exist; a system every private company wants to loot and leave behind; a system every public official seems to ignore.”

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Citing poor communication and numerous refusals to discuss issues facing transit workers, Local 627-Cincinnati, OH, members have unanimously voted “no confidence” in Southwest Ohio Regional Transit Authority (SORTA) CEO Dwight Ferrell.

“He refuses to answer my emails, return calls, and I have even been told by his office I can’t speak to him,” says Local President Troy Miller. “Every issue – it doesn’t matter how big or small it is – the general management should be able to sit down with us.”

No surprise

This comes as no surprise as similar complaints were filed against Ferrell by county employees while he served as manager in Fulton County, GA.

Adding fuel to the fire, Ferrell said in his December State of Metro address that he wants to work toward better relations with the transit workers and their union. “Happy employees are necessary for happy customers. My commitment, publicly, is to make that happen,” he said.

It’s time for Ferrell to live up to his words.
Local alerts public about need for safety on KC buses

“I wanted to make sure this story was told,” says Local President Jonothan Walker, 1287-Kansas City, MO. That’s why he contacted local TV station KCTV5 to alert the public about the increasing number of driver assaults that have been happening on the city’s buses.

Not enough protection

Walker told the station that the Kansas City Transportation Authority (KCATA) wasn’t providing enough protection for their operators. Part of the problem he said is that bus video of driver assaults has not been given to courts to view in the prosecution of assailants. Consequently, the Local believes that these criminals have been given lighter sentences.

Damage control

“All they care about is damage control,” says Walker. “So I’m not here to down them. I’m here to be real. That’s reality.”

Incredibly, Walker says, when the union complained about an apparently lost video and lack of support for assaulted members, KCATA said it would only get involved if a bus is damaged. Otherwise, Walker says, the agency regarded an attack on a driver as a personal matter.

KCATA says that just 19 drivers were attacked last year, but that number seems low when compared to the 325 times drivers had to pull over to call for help.

‘We are just trying to do our job’

The agency says it tried to get the video to the court, but it was somehow misplaced. They also say that the transit system has begun installing shields to protect drivers, as well as arranging for two fulltime police officers to patrol the buses.

Assaulted driver Lonnie Woodward hopes the changes will actually happen, and that KCATA is taking driver assaults seriously. “You need to take this as serious as the drivers are when we are being assaulted,” he says. “We are just trying to do our job.”
ATU’s 2016 training program began in earnest at the new Tommy Douglas Center as the International played host to ATU local and international officers, and other union activists who received instruction on topics vital to labor activism in the 21st Century.
ATU will holding it’s 58th International Convention from October 3-7, 2016, in Toronto, ON. Toronto is Canada’s largest city, fourth largest in North America, and home to a diverse population of about 2.8 million people. It’s a global cosmopolitan center for arts and culture that is consistently ranked one of the world’s most livable cities.

As an international city, all American citizens must have a valid passport to enter Canada.

If you don’t have a valid passport you will be turned back by Canadian border agents at the border or upon your arrival at the airport in Canada.

ATU suggests you apply for your first passport or renew your expired passport as soon as possible. It can take up to six weeks to get or renew a passport.

You can find all you need to know about how to apply for, or renew your passport, for yourself or any guests or family members traveling with you to the Convention at [http://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en.html](http://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en.html)

Don’t get stranded at the border – apply today!
The Canadian Labour Congress says February’s job numbers from Statistics Canada highlight the need for the kind of economic stimulus that urgently needed Employment Insurance (EI) reforms would produce now.

The job market was stagnant in January and unemployment rose to 7.2 percent. In Alberta, unemployment rose to 7.4 percent, the first time it has been above the national average since 1988.

Unemployment up

Over the past year, unemployment has risen by 123,000 workers across the country: more than half of these (69,000) are in Alberta. Most job creation has been in Ontario, while other provinces continue to struggle with slack labour markets.

Self-employment has grown twice as fast (1.3%) as employment (0.6%). Private sector job growth continues to be weak, adding only 30,000 jobs over the past 12 months – a growth rate of only 0.3%. Two sectors account for most job growth over the last year — health care and social assistance added 90,000 positions, and professional, scientific, and technical services added 38,000 positions.

“These job numbers and the slow economic growth we’re seeing now demonstrate the need for the kind of immediate stimulus that would come from urgently needed fixes to the employment insurance program,” says CLC President Hassan Yussuff.

The Liberal government has promised to review and improve the program, but Yussuff says there are urgently needed reforms that can be immediately implemented.

“Fewer than 40% of unemployed Canadians – and fewer than 37% of unemployed Albertans – are receiving EI,” says Yussuff. “Part of the problem is that workers run out of benefits before they can find a new job.”

The immediate reforms the CLC hopes to see include:

- Temporarily extending EI benefits for an additional five weeks to help displaced workers who risk exhausting their benefits while hunting for hard-to-find jobs. This would be especially helpful in hardest hit regions where jobs are especially scarce.
- Returning to the previous definition of “suitable employment” and restoring the “best 14 weeks” pilot programs that created a single national standard for determining benefit levels.
- Eliminating the eligibility requirement of 910 hours of insured employment for new entrants and re-entrants to the labour market to make access to EI fairer, especially for young workers and new Canadians.
- Hiring staff to make up for years of devastating cuts under the Conservatives to help eliminate unacceptable delays faced by workers trying to get benefits approved, decisions on appeals, or questions answered.
- Implementing the election promise for an increase of $200 million in funding for provincial literacy and essential-skills training aimed at those who don’t qualify for EI. While it’s not part of EI, it would help where it’s needed most.

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The Transportation Safety Board (TSB) has released the results of its investigation into the September 2013 collision between an OC Transpo bus and a VIA Rail train in Ottawa, ON, identifying numerous factors that contributed to the fatal crash.

Those factors included company practices, work-related driving distractions, speed, the configuration of the Transitway, and bus crashworthiness.

As a result of the collision, the train derailed and the bus was extensively damaged. Six people, including the bus driver, died, and 34 passengers sustained injuries. There were no injuries to the crew or passengers on the train.

**Lights, bells, gates were functional**

On September 18, 2013, at 8:47 am, an OC Transpo double-decker bus left the Fallowfield Bus Station in South Ottawa enroute to downtown Ottawa along the Transitway. Around the same time, the automatic warning devices, consisting of flashing lights, bells and gates at the Woodroffe Avenue and Transitway railway crossings were activated and fully functional.

Meanwhile, VIA Rail passenger train No. 51 was approaching these crossings. The train was within normal operating parameters and was slowing down to approach the Fallowfield train station. When the train crew realized that the bus would not stop in time, the emergency brakes were activated. About three seconds before impacting the train, the bus driver released the throttle and applied the brakes 35.6 metres away from the point of collision. The accident occurred just 39 seconds after the bus left the passenger terminal.

**15 interrelated findings**

“This complex investigation identified 15 inter-related findings that played a part in this tragedy,” says TSB Chair Kathy Fox. “Remove even one, and this may have had a very different outcome. But because of this accident, we are calling for concerted action to reduce the risk of railway crossing accidents.”

The main question focused on “Why didn’t the bus driver see the train and stop in time?” The investigation determined that, while accelerating toward the railway crossing, the bus was negotiating a significant left curve in the road. The driver’s view of the crossing was obstructed, and there was only a short time when the activated crossing signals were visible to the driver.

During this critical time, the driver was also distracted by surrounding conversations about seating on the upper deck, and by the perceived need to monitor the upper deck on a small screen that was positioned up and to the left of the driver’s seat and to make an announcement about no standing on the upper deck. At the speed the bus was travelling, the driver was unable to stop in time, even after passengers began to shout “stop”.

“Given the same circumstances, this accident could have happened to just about any driver,” said Rob Johnston, the investigator-in-charge.

To address the major safety deficiencies identified in the investigation, the Board has issued five recommendations that deal with the installation and use of in-vehicle video displays, crashworthiness standards, data recorders for commercial passenger buses, and grade separations at busy railway crossings, both in Ottawa and across Canada.
Ottawa transit workers ratify new agreement before expiration of current contract

Local 279 ratified a new agreement with the City of Ottawa in February that could bring labour peace to the city’s transit system for the next four years. The deal includes pay increases, premiums for overnight and evening shifts, and improvements to benefits. The current contract expires on March 31, 2016.

The new contract changes the way drivers are assigned and paid for overtime. Overtime work will now be offered in eight hour shifts and given to the most senior eligible employees that comply with overtime guidelines.

A “letter of understanding” is also included in the contract giving bus drivers the right to apply to become light rail operators when the Confederation Line opens in 2018.

Manitoba workers’ comp now covers PTSD

In what is being called a “first” for Canada, the Province of Manitoba will now provide workers’ compensation for employees who miss work due to post-traumatic stress disorder, or “PTSD.” The move is seen as recognition that many public service employees such as first-responders, and transit workers, endure experiences on the job that make it difficult to immediately return to work.

Transit workers eligible

Transit workers will now be eligible for provincial help who suffer from PTSD as a result of assault, or other traumatic events they experience on the job.

The Manitoba Labour Board will now presume a workers’ condition was caused by the job, making it much easier to access supports, treatment and compensation for PTSD. The new rules extend coverage and benefits to all eligible workers who are diagnosed with PTSD by a medical professional. This will ensure timely access to compensation and support services, with the long-term goal of reducing the stigma attached to mental illness.

Windsor Transit struggles to keep aging buses on the road

With money for capital expenditures becoming as scarce as operating funds, Canadian transit agencies are finding it just as hard to keep their aging buses on the road as systems in America.

Windsor, ON, has a particularly big problem as many of its buses are well overdue for replacement. In fact, it would cost almost $14 million to bring Windsor Transit up to industry standards.

Forty-eight of Windsor’s buses are over 15 years old, and two even date back to 1986 – that’s 30 years – well past their projected useful left of 12 years.

Parts not available for old buses

The agency strips out and saves all of the parts from the buses that it finally takes off the road because manufacturers no longer make those parts for the buses Windsor still runs.

As in the United States, the problem is caused by the elimination of federal and provincial funding for new buses several years ago. Windsor doesn’t plan to spend any money to replace their buses for the next three years.

The city is, however, working with a private firm to develop a plan to bring new buses into the system on a regular schedule in the future. Windsor is counting on money from the New Building Canada Fund to help replace buses that “have exceeded their expected useful life,” according to the city’s proposed 2016 budget.
Passion et maturité

Le président m’a appelé – mon président de section locale.

« Viendrez-vous à notre dîner du 100e anniversaire l’an prochain? »

« Bien sûr que j’y serai, Danny... »

Ensuite j’apprends qu’il me sera impossible de me désister – on m’a nommé « invité d’honneur ».

Ce n’est pas mon truc; le dîner, oui – mais je n’aime pas être « l’invité d’honneur », peu importe l’endroit.

Donc, j’y suis allé. Ce fut un immense plaisir de revoir 700 amis, frères et sœurs de la section locale 726 de Staten Island, avec qui j’ai travaillé côte à côte pendant plus de deux décennies.

Ma section locale était beaucoup plus rude que la vôtre

Ce fut une occasion de se remémorer l’importance d’un syndicat. Cette section locale a connu de nombreuses batailles internes, des rancunes, des bagarres et autres bouleversements. Donc, je peux affirmer à nos sections locales qui sont aux prises avec des conflits internes : ma section locale dans les années 1970 et 1980 était beaucoup plus rude que le vôtre ne l’est aujourd’hui – croyez-moi.

Mais la chose que j’ai apprise, et la leçon pour tous nos membres est la suivante : les gens qui sont les plus passionnés dans les combats internes du syndicat – oui, même ceux avec qui vous n’êtes pas d’accord – se soucient profondément, en général, du syndicat.

J’ai déjà écrit sur ce sujet, à propos de la querelle interne qui empêche les syndicats locaux de fonctionner. Nous avons parfois l’allure d’un débat présidentiel républicain!

Impossible de trouver de vieilles rancunes

Mais, revenons à la section locale 726. En regardant les invités dans la salle, je n’y voyais aucune trace des vieilles rancunes d’antan. Nous, en tant que génération de membres, avions mûri. Nous avions compris que ce qui nous séparait était beaucoup moins important que ce qui nous avait réunis. Après tout, nous sommes un syndicat.

Le syndicat, me disait un vieil ami, n’est rien d’autre qu’une idée. Ce n’est pas nos bâtiments ou nos bannières, nos contrats ou nos liens, ou même nos grèves. C’est l’idée que nous sommes plus puissants unis qu’isolés.

Cette puissance grandit lorsque vous la partagez. Dans vingt ans (vous, les jeunes, pouvez me croire), lorsque vous vous remémorez votre vie dans le syndicat, vous verrez d’un œil différent ce crétin qui vous a couru après, ou le gars qui a fait une remarque grossière à votre sujet au cours d’une réunion syndicale. Vous ne vous souviendrez pas du gars qui a écrit sur vous dans la salle de repos.

Vous regarderez ce que vous avez réalisé ensemble, même lorsque vous vous entre-déchiriez avec des opinions différentes. Vous sourirez de voir à quel point vos amis ont vieilli et combien de cheveux ils ont perdus.

Vous vous direz soit : « Nous avons surmonté nos différences et fait du monde un endroit meilleur » ou « Je suis content d’être quitte avec ce gars-là! »

Pensez à la possibilité qui s’offre à vous

Donc, aujourd’hui, songez à l’occasion que vous avez entre les mains, tout simplement parce que vous avez un syndicat qui vous permet d’améliorer la vie de votre famille, de vos enfants et de votre communauté. Je sais qu’en se rappelant les dernières 30 années du premier siècle de la section locale 726 lors de notre célébration, nos membres savaient que nous avions accompli de grandes choses : nous avons construit une section locale solide, uniquement parce que nous avons trouvé le moyen, à travers un syndicat démocratique, d’être forts ensemble, dans la solidarité. Et la partie « invité d’honneur »? Ce fut un honneur de siéger parmi les dirigeants et les membres d’un syndicat local bien vivant, à l’aube de son deuxième siècle au service des travailleurs.
Ce que vous ne savez peut-être pas sur Uber et d’autres sociétés de transport sur demande

Si vous êtes un conducteur de transport en commun dans n’importe quelle grande ville aux États-Unis ou au Canada, vous avez sans aucun doute entendu parler des nouvelles « sociétés de réseau de transport » (SRT) qui offrent leurs services par le biais d’applications sur des téléphones intelligents et d’autres appareils mobiles. Ces sociétés, telles Uber et Lyft, sont devenues très populaires en offrant un service de transport sur demande, à domicile et ce, la plupart du temps, à un coût moindre que celui d’une course en taxi.

Comme on pouvait s’y attendre, cet avènement a causé de graves perturbations au sein de l’industrie du taxi qui, elle, est fortement réglementée. Les conducteurs de SRT, par exemple, ne sont pas encore tenus d’obtenir des « médailles » ou de se procurer des permis pour hausser les tarifs en milieu métropolitain, ce qui a pour effet, entre autres mandats, de rendre le service de taxi plus dispendieux.

Au début, les conducteurs sur demande voyaient dans cette industrie un moyen d’obtenir un revenu décent en offrant ce nouveau service pratique au public. Mais, depuis, le nombre de conducteurs a monté en flèche, réduisant ainsi le nombre de courses pour chacun. Résultat : il est maintenant difficile, voire impossible, pour un conducteur de SRT de gagner un salaire décent.

Le conducteur que vous embaucherez aujourd’hui à partir de votre téléphone intelligent sera probablement une personne retraitée, un travailleur à temps partiel ou même, peut-être, un membre du SUT effectuant du travail sur demande durant ses temps libres pour des revenus supplémentaires.

Tout cela est très bien, à moins qu’Uber ou Lyft ne soit votre seule source de revenus, ou que vous soyez un conducteur à temps plein dans une industrie perturbée par une horde de conducteurs à temps partiel branchés à une appli.

« Honte à Uber! »


Les protestataires ont lancé un appel à la grève visant à paralyser le service basé sur une application, mais avec les 35 000 conducteurs travaillant pour Uber dans cette ville, l’organisation d’un tel moyen de pression au cœur de la Grosse Pomme semble un défi insurmontable.

Bien entendu, Uber et Lyft évitent la syndicalisation en affirmant qu’ils offrent uniquement la technologie et non le service de transport, les conducteurs étant considérés comme des contractuels et non des employés. Toutefois, le conseil municipal de Seattle n’a pas souscrit à cet argument : il a adopté une loi permettant aux conducteurs de ces sociétés de transport sur demande de se syndiquer.

Les membres du SUT se demandent peut-être : « En quoi tout cela me regarde-t-il? » Peut-être ne connaissent-ils pas encore des organisations comme Bridj – une société de transport qui offre par Internet un service d’autobus de luxe privés aux travailleurs urbains qui ne veulent pas utiliser le transport en commun (voir la page suivante).

Transport adapté

De plus, Uber a également fait des percées dans le transport adapté – captant l’attention des communautés qui souhaitent réduire leurs coûts actuels en matière de service de transport pour les malades, les aînés et les personnes handicapées.

À l’instar d’Amazon.com, les SRT élargissent leur accessibilité en offrant des services qu’ils n’offraient pas auparavant comme la livraison de colis et de services mécaniques ou médicaux directement chez vous.

Certains disent que cette tendance fait partie de l’économie opportuniste croissante qui se dessine en Amérique du Nord. Peu importe le nom donné à ce phénomène, les nouveaux fournisseurs de services sur demande commencent déjà à réduire leurs tarifs tout en continuant d’enrichir les quelques chanceux qui contrôlent la technologie dont dépendent de plus en plus de gens pour trouver du travail.

Le SUT évalue présentement cette nouvelle industrie du transport sur demande, basée sur une appli, pour en déterminer l’impact, si impact il y a, sur l’emploi de nos membres et celui des travailleurs du transport en général. Nous invitons tous ceux qui travaillent pour ces fournisseurs de transport sur demande, et particulièrement les membres du SUT, d’entrer en communication avec nous. Toutes les communications seront traitées de façon strictement confidentielle.

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**VOICI MAINTENANT :**

L’application mobile SUT!

À l’affût des dernières nouvelles et des mises à jour du SUT?
Nous avons une appli pour cela.

À la recherche d’événements ou d’activités du SUT dans votre région?
Nous avons une appli pour cela.

Voir des photos du SUT en action?
Nous avons une appli pour cela.

Le lancement de l’appli SUT pour téléphones intelligents est le plus récent ajout du SUT dans ses efforts continus à vouloir se connecter à ses membres et aux défenseurs du transport en commun, grâce à une technologie de pointe. Le but de cette première version de l’application est de tester ses caractéristiques et ses fonctions, et de savoir à quel point vous les aimez. Nous voulons que cela fonctionne pour vous donc, selon vos commentaires, nous continuerons de faire des réglages et des ajustements en cours de route.

**Visitez le http://bit.ly/1QmdvRt et commencez à utiliser votre appli dès aujourd’hui!**
In Memoriam

Death Benefits Awarded November 1, 2015 - December 31, 2015

1- MEMBERS AT LARGE
   EDWARD HANSEN
   RUSSELL E THALMAN

22- WORCESTER, MA
   WILLIAM S LA BAIRE

23- DETROIT, MI
   ROBERT E DENK

35- PITTSBURGH, PA
   WILLIAM R JORDAN

113- TORONTO, ON
   MICHAEL E KELLEN

1300- BALTIMORE, MD
   LESTER F PARKER

1287- KANSAS CITY, MO
   KEITH A THOMAS

1277- LOS ANGELES, CA
   DONALD J ROBERTSON

1241- LANCASTER, PA
   JEFFREY YOUNG

1181- NEW YORK, NY
   JOHN E BEEMER

1385- DAYTON, OH
   ELMER PENCE

1505- WINNIPEG, MB
   JOHN GIbson

1572- MISSISSAUGA, ON
   JOHN GIBSON

1321- ALBANY & TROY, NY
   JOHN GIBSON

1342- BUFFALO, NY
   JOHN GIBSON

241- CHICAGO, IL
   EARL ALLEN

580- SYRACUSE, NY
   JOSEPH H WELCH

587- SEATTLE, WA
   RICHARD B GREEN

788- ST LOUIS, MO
   MARGARET SPINNER

823- ELIZABETH, NJ
   WILLIAM H HUNTER

824- NEW BRUNSWICK, NJ
   GEORGE W MUMFORD

880- CAMDEN, NJ
   JOHN SHINN

998- MILWAUKEE, WI
   JOHN SHINN

113- TORONTO, ON
   MICHAEL E KELLEN

1572- MISSISSAUGA, ON
   NATHANIEL JULIEN

1548- PLYMOUTH, MA
   RICHARD EDWARD POCHÉ
INTRODUCING:

The ATU Mobile App!

Looking for the latest news and updates about ATU? There’s an app for that. Looking for ATU events or actions in your area? There’s an app for that. Looking for photos of ATU in action? There’s an app for that.

The release of the ATU smartphone app is just the latest element of ATU’s ongoing efforts to connect with ATU members and public transit advocates using the latest technology. The goal of this first version of the app is to test its features and functions and see how you like them. We want this to work for you, so we’ll be making tweaks and adjustments along the way.

Visit http://bit.ly/1QmdvRt to get started today!