Winnipeg Transit workers ratify new contract with city

After back-and-forth negotiations and the rejection of an early deal, Winnipeg bus drivers and maintenance workers voted to ratify a new contract. Local 1505 was calling on the city to adopt a “safer, saner approach” for transit service, fairly compensate transit workers, and hire enough drivers to adequately serve their communities.

ATU Facebook page 14,000 “likes” and counting

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 stories and recommending our page to “friends,” ATU has more than 14,000 “likes.” Help us reach 15,000 by telling your family and friends to “like” ATU’s Facebook page. 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 issues.

Edmonton Local wants AC on buses

Bus drivers and passengers alike are suffering from the heat as temperatures soar in Edmonton, AB. Five operators have had to stop working and one was taken to the hospital this summer due to the heat. Edmonton Transit is the only major Canadian bus system that doesn’t have air conditioning. Local 569 is pushing the city to have AC retrofitted on city transit. “We’re trying to forestall [a] tragedy by gathering the data and proving to City Council that you have a responsibility to protect people here,” says Local President Steve Bradshaw.

Correction: Johnnie L. Motton 241-Chicago, IL, was incorrectly included among those for whom death benefits were awarded in the In Memoriam section of the March-April 2015 issue. In Transit regrets the error.

International Officers Emeritus

International President Jim La Sala, ret.
International President Warren George, ret.
International Executive Vice President Ellis Franklin, ret.
International Executive Vice President Mike Siano, ret.
2 International Officers & General Executive Board
   NEWS Briefs
3 Index Page
6 NDP pledges predictable, stable and transparent transit funding
   Poll suggests NDP could capture ‘change-vote’ in national election
7 International President’s Message:
   Union Citizenship
8 Alberta member poised to wield real power
9 Outrage in Baton Rouge: Transit CEO fires ATU negotiating team members as bargaining begins
10 International Executive Vice President’s Message:
    Officer training, friendships strengthen ATU
11 International Secretary-Treasurer’s Message:
    It’s time to fight for a real Independence Day
12 Americans with Disabilities Act marks 25th anniversary
   Toronto Local: Canadians rejecting for-profit transit schemes
13 Pope encourages public transit, criticizes lack of availability in urban areas
14 Transit workers kick-start DC Streetcar campaign
   SORTA awards streetcar contract to Transdev after long battle
15 Edmonton rolls out campaign to end sexual harassment on transit
   NY makes subway sexual assault a felony
16 ATU photo contest winners
17 DC transit workers forced to ‘go’ on the bus
   Palm Beach Local strikes deal with County after long struggle
19 Report shows wide racial disparities in transit times
   Public sector, transit cuts hurting Black communities
22 ATU HERO: Sharp-eyed CA member saves kidnapped 3-year-old boy
   Alert Alameda driver spots ‘at-risk’ teen
23 Halifax member spends vacation giving to others
24 Irish transit workers strike blow against Dublin privatization scheme
25 Harper’s new Public Transit Fund to rely on privatization
26 Guelph councilors endorse transit after month on bus
27 TTC power surge shutdown highlights system’s woes
   Hamilton Local takes ‘Big Bike’ ride for heart and stroke
28 Translations (Spanish)
31 In Memoriam
32 Save the Date - 58th International Convention
Times change, and the structures that serve people well in one era are often found insufficient by the next.

A new era is dawning for our Canadian members whose local officers voted to create a new national structure – ATU Canada – at the Canadian Council Conference in June.

Protected by strong national and provincial labour laws, our Canadian members were the envy of their southern brothers and sisters for decades. But Canadian unionists can no longer rely on those protections.

**New structure needed to counter attacks**

Today, our Canadian locals face significant attacks upon their collective bargaining rights, workers’ wages, pensions, and job security. Our northern members also brave daily threats and assaults while simply doing their jobs. Further, they endure threats of privatization and transit funding cuts.

In light of these issues, our Canadian local officers came together to create a new, more representative and proactive structure designed to leverage the strength of all of their members against the anti-labour forces that now confront ATU in Canada.

**Meetings**

The ultimate decision to create ATU Canada came after months of meetings and deliberations between Canadian local presidents. Beginning in March 2015, our Canadian locals met in Toronto to discuss issues of national concern.

Led by Elaine Bernard, the Canadian director of Harvard’s Labour Studies Program, the March meeting was designed to ensure an open-ended and full discussion of the substantive issues and organizational concerns facing our locals.

During the discussion sponsored by the International and facilitated by experienced mediators and Canadian labour relations experts, a clear consensus emerged among
virtually all Canadian locals that the Canadian Council as presently structured and operated needed to be changed and a new entity formed.

A subsequent survey sent to all Canadian locals confirmed that each of our Canadian locals faced serious external threats from privatization, funding shortfalls, anti-union legislation, and the urgent need for more and higher quality education and training programs.

Greater communication, strategic planning, strong coalitions needed

Virtually every local responding to the survey echoed the meeting participants’ views that greater information sharing and communication among and within locals was needed, along with training, research and resources for strategic long term planning for internal organizing, member mobilization, and the building of strong community pro-transit, pro-labour coalitions among our riders and community-based allies.

In preparation for recommendations to be presented to the June Canadian Council meeting, participants at the March meeting agreed to the appointment of a “restructuring committee” to begin to review options for a new organization and set of bylaws for consideration at a future founding convention. The committee met on May 17, and discussed provisions that were included in draft bylaws submitted for discussion in June and thereafter.

On June 2, the presidents of the Union’s Canadian locals gathered before the Canadian Council meeting to discuss the future of the Council and the establishment of ATU Canada. The presidents overwhelmingly approved proposing motions providing for the dissolution of the Canadian Council as of June 6, and the immediate establishment of ATU Canada on an interim basis for the purpose of replacing the former body until a founding convention is held no later than October 1.

A strong, united voice

Affirming the importance of a strong united voice representing the interests of all ATU locals in Canada, the Canadian Council delegates approved similar motions to dissolve the Canadian Council and create ATU Canada on June 5. As a result, no Council officer elections were held and the terms of the incumbent officers expired.

ATU Canada’s founding convention will be held in Ontario where delegates from each local (in the same number as at the International Convention) will meet to consider and adopt bylaws and conduct elections for new ATU Canada officers.

In response to the actions by the local presidents and Council delegates, the International, on June 9, placed the Council in trusteeship to manage its orderly dissolution and oversee the close-out of its affairs, pending the fall convention.

International Union endorsement

ATU International wholeheartedly endorses the creation of ATU Canada. International President Larry Hanley pledged his strong support for a representative body “by Canada, in Canada, and for Canada.”

Hanley praised the efforts of the local presidents and delegates. He declared that the International will work with ATU Canada to develop its research, education and training, strategic planning, and coalition building capacity to advance the goals of our locals and protect our members’ vital interests. Through this new, unified structure Canadian locals shall have a strong national voice for ATU in Canada. ❖
NDP pledges predictable, stable and transparent transit funding

NDP Party Leader Tom Mulcair is throwing the weight of the New Democratic Party behind increased infrastructure and public transit spending in the federal election campaign this fall.

Mulcair is promising that if NDP wins enough seats in Parliament to form a government, he'll transfer an extra penny per litre in gas tax to improve public transit in the Lower Mainland. Specifically, the NDP government would provide $1.3 billion per year to Canadian municipalities to spend on public transit over the next 20 years.

A ‘real partner’

“Communities have been let down by successive Liberal and Conservative governments that have failed to make a dent in Canada’s infrastructure deficit, which sits at a staggering $172 billion and growing,” says Mulcair. “An NDP government will be a real partner to Canada’s municipalities with concrete investments to build and repair infrastructure that Canadian families and businesses require, and reduce commute times.”

The leader says his “Better Transit Plan,” developed in partnership with provinces and territories, will ensure predictable, stable and transparent public transit funding to tackle gridlock in Canada’s cities, get Canadians to-and-from work or school more quickly, and help the environment.

Poll suggests NDP could capture ‘change-vote’ in national election

As in the United States, politicians in Canada are gearing up for the next national election on October 19, and a new poll reveals that at this point, it's a tight three-way race.

Responses to the question, “Who would you vote for tomorrow?” put Conservatives at 31% and both the New Democratic Party (NDP) and Liberals at 28%. In the province with the most seats Liberals have a slight lead over Conservatives (in Ontario) and the NDP has a sizeable lead over Liberals in Quebec.

A closer look suggests that some movement from Conservatives toward the NDP is happening among voters 60 and older – traditionally a critical bastion of Conservative support. NDP support has also grown among those with higher levels of education, homeowners, and union members.

More Canadians in the mood for change

The poll’s numbers indicate that the desire for a change in Ottawa is rising. Only 25% of those polled say, “I know how I will vote and that won’t change”. Among this group, 37% intend to vote Conservative.

There is a larger potential for the NDP brand to consolidate the “change vote” than in the past. However, the Liberal brand is highly competitive, especially in the critical battleground of Ontario, and is seen as a more likely victor in October.

NDP potential expands

Recently, there has been a five-point increase in the percentage of people who say they would consider voting NDP — giving the party now the largest potential voter pool at 56%, followed by the Liberals at 51% and the Conservatives at 45%. Just about a third would consider voting Green.

The percentage of those who would consider voting NDP is up the most in Quebec but is also up in Atlantic Canada with slight increases in BC, Alberta, and Ontario.
Our history is a mystery – maybe to most union members. As Fox and other comedy channels push anti-union rhetoric, some union members may wonder why they are members.

So many times I’ve read a letter or taken a phone call that begins, “I’m a dues paying member....”

This is like our citizenship. There was once a class in high school called “Citizenship.” But over the last 40 years citizens have been redefined as TAXPAYERS (emphasis from the corporate propagandizers).

Yes, we pay taxes, but the whole enterprise of government is directed toward pulling together common wealth to serve our mutual needs. More on this another time.

As Union members we have an organization that works for our mutual good. To fund it, we pay dues. But that is where union membership begins – not where it ends.

We also need to come to meetings, voice our opinion, volunteer when the Union needs us. Simply paying dues doesn’t cut it. I think when members describe themselves as “dues paying members” they diminish themselves. We are so much more than taxpayers and dues payers.

I recently heard a local president address her members at a union meeting telling them:

“You’re sitting in a lunchroom and listening to a member run the Union down. You stay out of the conversation because you think you should mind your own business. The Union IS your business!” she said.

Yes it is.

If this Union goes away, our members’ wages will fall and working conditions will be totally up to the boss. The bosses are working hard to make that happen.

And in the U.S. there is a free rider movement going on. It’s a wolf in sheep’s clothing, a Trojan horse designed to destroy workers’ power called “Right to Work.”

It’s an attempt to break workers’ chance to ever climb out of poverty and have good pay for a fair days work. They are doing it by trying to break up the “union shop.”

In the 25 right-to-work states workers get union benefits without paying union dues. That means they live off the dues paid by union members where they work. But more than that (and this is why the rich and corporations fight for a dues-free environment) it means that unions (working people) are limited in their power to fight for and defend workers.

Want a raise? Make your union powerful.

Want better health care? Make your union powerful.

Want to put you kids through college? Make your union powerful.

But in the world in which we live, it’s clear that while paying dues is a start, we need to do a lot more. We need to have influence in our communities, with our neighbors and with our riders.

In the next 14 months Canadian and U.S. voters will go to the polls to elect our future leaders. To change our countries, we need serious, radical change. We can’t get that by sucking up the same old rhetoric from the press or politicians. We need to carve out a different path – one that gets us back on track as societies that value work and reward sacrifice.

Social security, Medicare, and minimum wages were passed during times in our history when unions were strong. Pensions, health care and decent wages were products of strong unions – not strong corporations. Dues helped, but action by serious working people is what made the difference.

It wasn’t suits and ties that got good contracts; it was picket lines and strikes.

It was the unity of millions of workers saying, “We want a fair share of what we produce with our work!” that made it happen.

If you make your history less of a mystery, you will become more than a “dues paying member....”
Alberta member poised to wield real power

ATU bus operators are used to doing a lot of important things at the same time. In addition to negotiating mammoth vehicles through city streets, they also take fares, look out for the general welfare of their passengers, and get them to their destinations on time. That’s a lot of responsibility.

Perhaps that’s why former driver Brian Mason is so well suited to the new jobs he’s been given since the New Democratic Party won a majority of the seats in Alberta’s legislature, giving them a mandate to form a new government.

In addition to his duties as government house leader in the legislature, the newly-elected premiere, Rachel Notley, has appointed Mason to dual posts as head of both the ministries of infrastructure and transportation.

Started driving out of necessity

That would seem to be a natural place for Mason, still a member of Local 569-Edmonton, AB, to serve the province.

Shortly after the NDP’s surprising victory in May, one Twitter wag asked Mason if he would make Albertans pay their taxes in “exact change.” In response, Mason quipped, “Yes, but you’ll get a transfer.”

The NDP leader started driving buses out of necessity, having run out of money to continue his college education.

“The recession hit in the ’80s and I wound up keeping the job and it wound on and on,” says Mason, who became more involved in the union during a turbulent period of strikes and layoffs.

He was briefly laid off in 1983, ran for the City Council, and lost. In 1989, he decided to run again, but there was a law standing in his way that prevented city employees from running for office. He filed an official challenge to the law, which was denied. But the publicity he generated in the process ended up being a boon to his political aspirations.

“I resigned with a big fanfare and a news conference. I went to hand in my resignation to transit with TV cameras behind me,” he remembers. He printed all kinds of political signs and buttons with the slogan: “You know, the bus driver” under his name. He won.

Council member, provincial legislator

He served on the Edmonton City Council for 10 years before voters elected him to the provincial legislature.

He served as the leader of the small NDP caucus there for another decade, but stepped down to allow Notley to do the job.

Recently, he was asked the inevitable question: When he was driving a bus did he ever think he’d be where he is today?

“No,” he said, but added, “When I was sitting at my desk three months ago I didn’t think I would be here today.”

Now, in the wake of the NDP’s accession to power, this ATU member has a chance to really make a difference in the lives of the people of Alberta.
In one of the most outrageous displays of managerial arrogance and contempt for transit workers in recent memory, Bob Mirabito, CEO of Capital Area Transit System (CATS) in Baton Rouge, LA, began a collective bargaining session with Local 1546 by firing a member of the Local’s negotiating team sitting in the room.

That firing came on the heels of Mirabito’s indefinite suspension of another officer, which occurred just before the meeting.

Mirabito declared that the two officers and a third who was on medical leave were “inactive” employees barred from participating in negotiations, and demanded they leave the room.

International Vice President Ray Rivera, an experienced negotiator assisting in the bargaining sessions, said he had “never seen such an act of disrespect or intimidation by an administration to its employees.”

Rivera told the remaining local officers to leave the room, and informed the CEO that they “would not negotiate under these conditions and that they were not bargaining in good faith.”

“It was totally unprofessional… It’s unheard of,” says Rivera.

Local stages protest

Fed up with the Mirabito’s behavior at the table, Local 1546 members took to the streets to protest the transit chief’s behavior.

Earlier this year International President Larry Hanley demanded Mirabito’s resignation after the CATS CEO publicly lamented that he could attract more riders if he didn’t have so many African American employees.

Mirabito eventually apologized for the comment that apparently didn’t bother the CATS board, which gave him a 20% raise, making him one of the highest-paid public officials in East Baton Rouge Parish government.

In Transit will keep you posted on further developments.
Officer training, friendships strengthen ATU

JAVIER PEREZ, JR., INTERNATIONAL EXEC. VICE PRESIDENT

One evening earlier this month I met and welcomed another group of new ATU officers who will soon commence contract negotiations back home. The group of 29 was attending our contract costing class at the Maritime Center in Baltimore.

New officers are excited from the twists and turns of their election campaigns; they are rightly elated by their victory. But then what?

There is a 1972 movie entitled “The Candidate” starring Robert Redford. The movie begins with Redford, a young good-looking attorney and principled advocate fighting for farm workers’ rights and other progressive causes. There is an upcoming Senate race for a seat occupied by a powerful, entrenched incumbent. All the likely challengers have melted away in the face of the incumbent’s poll numbers and perceived power. What is the party to do?

Politically savvy handlers see in Redford a telegenic candidate who could win. Redford’s father, now retired, is a former governor of the state who could lend a helping hand. Redford is reluctant to seek his father’s help. He has a love-hate relationship with his father who was a master of the kind of political schemes he finds repugnant; schemes that are at odds with the principles he holds dear.

What do we do now?

But, the savvy handlers win out. They convince Redford that winning the Senate seat is the most effective way he can promote his agenda and change the “status quo.” Bit-by-bit, as the campaign unfolds, under pressure from his political handlers, the candidate modifies his principled positions ever so slightly to give him enough wiggle room by fudging an answer here or a commitment there. And with his father’s last minute help, he wins.

As the movie nears its end Redford is at his best, leaning slightly around the podium to make eye contact with supporters, running his hand through his hair and then strategically bringing his fist to mouth as he clears his throat to speak. At the end of the speech Redford runs down a hotel service hallway, and grabs his chief political advisor, telling him, “We need to talk.” They duck into a vacant room with the camera narrowing in on Redford’s face, which is now one of uncertainty. Realizing that the campaign is done and he has no plan on how to govern, he asks, “What do we do now?”

Newly elected officers can get caught up in the allure of their new position’s fleeting power, and the seemingly endless line of well-wishers on election night. But then with the morning comes the question, “What do I do now?”

Training doesn’t stop at classroom door

Unlike the situation “The Candidate,” found himself in, our local officers are provided ongoing classroom training to assist them in their day-to-day challenges. But training does not stop at the classroom door. The informal time officers share with their counterparts from across Canada and the United States provides opportunities for shared discussions, ideas swapped and debated, experiences shared and expounded upon.

All serve to enhance the classroom work and helps to mold a better officer and a stronger ATU. I enjoy our discussions and look forward to many more. The life long friendships made in this setting strengthen ATU.

Please visit www.atu.org for more information and the latest ATU news.
It’s time to fight for a real Independence Day

Americans really know how to celebrate Independence Day – the “Fourth of July,” and this year was no exception. Millions flocked to parades and fireworks displays all across the nation. I’m sure it was much the same for our northern members on Canada Day, as well.

That’s all well and good. But, I’m beginning to wonder how much longer we’ll have something to celebrate.

Everywhere I look I see citizens losing their independence. They’re losing their ability to have any say in the services government is supposed to provide. They’re losing the ability to defend themselves against unfair treatment on the job. They’re losing the ability to find a secure job with a living wage, and they’re losing the retirements they worked all their lives to acquire.

Losing the right to vote

In the U.S., the poor, persons with disabilities, and the elderly are effectively losing the right to vote. And a permanent underclass of working poor continues to grow as wage earners fall out of the middle class.

Corporatism is the incorrigible force that is devouring so much of the world’s wealth that governments must go, hat in hand, begging private businesses to deliver the services people expect the public sector to provide.

And when private enterprise takes over public services, public services become the servants of private enterprise. The public good is a secondary consideration. Slowly, corporations that we have no control over begin to govern our lives.

In the transit industry multinational corporations are taking over more and more of our properties. These parasitic conglomerates pay miserable wages, and provide unacceptable, unsafe service so that they can send as much of taxpayers’ money overseas.

How is that different from the way the British imposed unfair taxes on American colonies before the Revolution? There really is no difference between the tyranny of a foreign multinational and the tyranny of a foreign government. The result is the same – poverty for more and more people.

This grim outlook may seem a little outlandish to some, but in what other way can the foreign takeover of our public assets and treasuries be characterized?

It’s time to fight back

Corporations worship at the altar of the “free market” which is anything but “free” – as it is controlled by the monopolizing forces of globalization. Thus, the “market rate” is kept artificially low and any real competition is forced out.

Amazingly, we are called unpatriotic when we question any of this. Those who think that workers should be paid more than the abysmal wages dictated by the market are called socialists – which, whether it’s true or not, marks them as an enemy of all that is good and holy.

Have you had enough? I know I have. It’s time to fight back.

In these pages you’ll see multiple examples of ATU members doing just that. I hope they will inspire you to get involved in the fight in your community.

You see, we’re not just fighting for our jobs – we’re fighting, as we always have, for independence.

Please visit www.atu.org for more information and the latest ATU news.
Americans with Disabilities Act marks 25th anniversary

ENSURES EQUAL RIGHTS FOR ALL INCLUDING ACCESS TO SAFE, RELIABLE PUBLIC TRANSIT

Twenty-five years ago, President George H.W. Bush signed into law the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to ensure the civil rights of people with disabilities. This legislation established a clear and comprehensive national mandate for the elimination of discrimination against individuals with disabilities.

Living up to those principles, ATU members working in paratransit across the country have been safely and reliably transporting people with disabilities to work, school, the doctor and other important daily tasks to allow them to be full participants in our communities.

To mark the 25th anniversary of the ADA, ATU salutes the hard work, dedication and commitment of our members in paratransit to ensuring equal rights and opportunity for people with disabilities.

While the ATU celebrates and recognizes the progress that has been made for equality and inclusion under the ADA, privatization of paratransit from Washington, DC to Dallas, TX, to Palm Beach, FL to Phoenix, AZ, and other cities is threatening the rights of people with disabilities.

We at the ATU continue to fight outsourcing of paratransit to private companies where profits come before riders and workers. We recommit our efforts to ensuring public transit affords all people equal mobility regardless of their disabilities, race, color or gender.

Toronto Local: Canadians rejecting for-profit transit schemes

“Vancouver’s massive rejection of a sales tax increase to fund failed and increasingly expensive for-profit transit projects is a warning to governments that the public tolerance for privatization of public services has reached a breaking point,” says Local President Bob Kinnear, 113-Toronto, ON.

“Just as we saw in neighbouring Alberta, voters are tired of being fleeced by the corporate-government complex of backroom deals, huge political patronage and total lack of transparency involving taxpayers’ money.”

“Everyone who followed this story knows that Vancouverites are rational people who know they need more transit but do not trust the so-called public-private partnership – Translink – that has under-delivered on service improvements and wasted huge amounts of money while not being publicly accountable.

“People are tired of paying more and more for fewer and more stressed public services because corporate profits now have to be figured into the cost,” says Kinnear.
With the publication of *Laudato Si* (“Praise Be”) Pope Francis has coupled his well-known concern for the world’s poor with a call for the first world to take active steps to save the environment.

There is a lot in *Laudato Si* to encourage ATU members, religious or not, to redouble their advocacy efforts. The pontiff is unequivocal in his criticism of the lack of good public transportation in urban areas, and his endorsement of public transit as a way to improve the atmosphere and slow climate change.

Here are a couple of excerpts (emphasis added):

“26. …There is an urgent need to develop policies so that, in the next few years, the emission of carbon dioxide and other highly polluting gases can be drastically reduced… Some countries have made considerable progress… Investments have also been made in means of production and transportation, which consume less energy and require fewer raw materials…”

“44. Nowadays, for example, we are conscious of the disproportionate and unruly growth of many cities, which have become unhealthy to live in, not only because of pollution caused by toxic emissions but also as a result of urban chaos, poor transportation, and visual pollution and noise.”

**Positive examples**

“58. In some countries, there are positive examples of environmental improvement: …advances have been made in the production of non-polluting energy and in the improvement of public transportation.”

“103. Technoscience, when well directed, can produce important means of improving the quality of human life, from useful domestic appliances to great transportation systems, bridges, buildings and public spaces.”

“153. The quality of life in cities has much to do with systems of transport, which are often a source of much suffering for those who use them. Many cars, used by one or more people, circulate in cities, causing traffic congestion, raising the level of pollution, and consuming enormous quantities of non-renewable energy.”

**Nobility in care for creation**

“211. There is a nobility in the duty to care for creation through little daily actions… Education in environmental responsibility can encourage ways of acting which directly and significantly affect the world around us, such as… using public transport or car-pooling, planting trees, turning off unnecessary lights, or any number of other practices. All of these reflect a generous and worthy creativity, which brings out the best in human beings.”

POPE ENCOURAGES PUBLIC TRANSIT, CRITICIZES LACK OF AVAILABILITY IN URBAN AREAS
Transit workers kick-start DC Streetcar campaign

With the campaign theme “Fix it, Staff it, Start it!”, Washington, DC, area transit workers have launched a campaign to support eight fired DC Streetcar employees and pressure District officials to finally open the troubled project.

Outsourced by the DC Department of Transportation (DDOT) to the private French owner RDMT/McDonald Transit, the beleaguered streetcar system has had numerous problems, missteps and delays in launching the service.

NLRB complaint filed

Shortly after ATU reached an agreement with RDMT/McDonald Transit to hold a union election, eight employees were fired for trumped-up reasons. ATU maintains the workers were fired in retaliation for union organizing activities.

The Union has filed a complaint with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) charging that DC Streetcar management interfered with its workers’ legal right to organize. The charge is still under review at the Board.

As part of the campaign ATU has held rallies outside the streetcar property and launched a petition drive, accusing the DDOT of shrinking its responsibility for the project by outsourcing to a private contractor.

SORTA awards streetcar contract to Transdev after long battle

It took only 15 minutes for the Southwest Ohio Regional Transit Authority (SORTA) board to decide to award the contract to operate Cincinnati’s new streetcar line to the private, French multinational, Transdev (formerly Veolia), instead of employing members of Local 627.

The decision came after a protracted battle waged by the Local and Cincinnati AFL-CIO to persuade the city council to endorse ATU operation of the streetcar.

But, the city decided not to decide, leaving the matter in the hands of SORTA’s pro-privatization board. A court subsequently rejected the Local’s request for an injunction preventing the agency from awarding a contract on procedural grounds.

Some city officials predict that Transdev workers will be organized by ATU.

“I think it’s important that these employees be organized, I hope that ATU is involved,” says Derek Bauman, Southwest Ohio regional chair of the transit advocacy group “All Aboard Ohio.”

Irresponsible

Local 627 argued that SORTA falsely claimed an ATU contract would cost $700,000 more per year than a non-union agreement. Local President Troy Miller says it is irresponsible for the city council to let a for-profit transnational entity run the streetcar, make a profit off of Cincinnati taxpayers, and in turn, ship the profits out of Cincinnati.

Furthermore, the METRO management staff, overseeing the streetcar project enjoy the benefits of being a part of the Ohio Public Employee Retirement System, but don’t want the streetcar employees to have these same benefits. Talk about a double standard and a complete insult to all METRO workers. Check the ATU website for latest news on this story.
New campaign

Edmonton, AB, has begun a new campaign to make transit passengers aware that sexual harassment won’t be tolerated, should be reported, and will be taken seriously. “A culture of zero tolerance, that’s my expectation,” says Mayor Don Iveson.

In May, the city’s transportation committee recommended that a public service campaign be developed that includes training for all operators on taking sexual harassment seriously, an update to Edmonton’s transit app so safety incidents can be reported easily, and an emergency contact number that can be discretely texted.

The head of security for Edmonton Transit reports that the system has begun training staff about sexual harassment.

Panic button

Edmonton’s LRT cars all have a “panic button” that passengers can push if they see or experience a problem, but education has to take place to convince riders that harassment is a serious enough reason to sound the alarm.

“We need to find ways that everybody feels safe when they board transit,” says transit rider Mari Chartier. “More importantly we need to find ways that when everyone boards transit, they take responsibility for their safety and safety of others and they have the information and tools to deal with harassment.”

NY makes subway sexual assault a felony

New York state has passed the “subway grinder” bill that makes contact of any kind for sexual gratification on public transit “without the consent of the other person,” a felony. This type of sexual assault has previously been classified as a misdemeanor.

The new law was passed in response to a series of crimes by a “subway grinder” who accosted three straphangers in 2013. He was slapped with felony charges that were dropped when the New York Court of Appeals ruled the charges could only apply, “If the victims were able to prove they felt threatened.”

The grinder was instead charged with misdemeanor sexual abuse, a count that carries a maximum three-year sentence. Under the new law, offenders would face up to seven years in prison, if convicted.
ATU announces winners of first annual photo contest

ATU congratulates the winners of its first annual photo contest. We thank everyone who submitted photographs for the competition, and urge everyone to keep taking great pictures that they can submit for next year’s contest!

The winning photographs and photographers are shown below:

1. ROBERT KRAMER, LOCAL 1555 - OAKLAND, CA

2. BRIAN TANSY, LOCAL 741 - LONDON, ON

3. ABDULLAHI ALI, LOCAL 279 - OTTAWA, ON
DC transit workers forced to ‘go’ on the bus

Poor or no access to restrooms on the job is forcing many DC transit workers with no other option to relieve themselves on their bus, Local 689’s Chief Safety Officer James Madaras told the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB).

Madaras served on a panel during an NTSB public hearing on Metro’s organizational and safety culture in the wake of Metro’s fatal smoke incident that injured dozens on January 12. He called the problem a matter of human rights and dignity and a serious safety issue.

Widespread problem

Inadequate bathroom breaks and facilities is a widespread problem among bus drivers across North America. Under pressure to make tight schedules and keep their riders and bosses satisfied, bus operators in Connecticut, Portland, Las Vegas and Seattle have voiced concern in recent years about the impact of limited restroom breaks and its affect on their health and jobs.

According to a study in *Neurourology and Urodynamics* an extreme urge to use the bathroom has similar cognitive effects as 24 hours without sleep, or a .05% blood alcohol content. In addition, extreme urine retention can lead to urinary tract infections, bladder damage, and kidney disease.

Metro slow to act

Local President Jackie Jeter says Metro has been aware of the seriousness of the problem for many years, but has been slow to act. The Local has asked that Metro officials take several actions to address the issue including providing a list of all bathroom facilities available for operators to use on each bus line.

Recognizing this disturbing problem, DC Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton, D, recently sent a letter to Secretary of Labor Thomas Perez requesting a federal investigation into how to improve the availability of restrooms for public transit workers.

Palm Beach Local strikes deal with County after long struggle

After five years of acrimonious debate and public protest the members of Local 1577-Palm Beach, FL, have come to a settlement with the Palm Beach County Commissioners over broken promises that all of their drivers would be brought up to the top of the pay scale after five years in the previous contract.

Just before an impasse hearing before a special magistrate scheduled for May 25, the Local asked the County to go back to the bargaining table one last time, and an agreement was struck. The members ratified the deal two days later.
Symptoms of coronary artery disease in women may surprise you.

CHEST DISCOMFORT • HEARTBURN • DIZZINESS • BACK PAIN • SHORTNESS OF BREATH

Talk with your healthcare provider about the right testing option for you.

- What are the advantages and risks of each testing option?
- Are you a candidate for a simple, convenient blood test that is effective for women?

Know your testing options, visit
www.GoSpreadtheWord.com
facebook.com/GoSpreadtheWord
Report shows wide racial disparities in transit times

“Urban transit systems in most American cities... have become a genuine civil rights issue – and a valid one – because the layout of rapid-transit systems determines the accessibility of jobs to the black community. If transportation systems in American cities could be laid out so as to provide an opportunity for poor people to get meaningful employment, then they could begin to move into the mainstream of American life...”

Almost 50 years ago Dr. Martin Luther King (quoted above) recognized that it is practically impossible for African Americans to climb out of poverty without transportation to a good job.

A recent study, “The Transit Time Penalty and Its Racial Implications,” released by a coalition of progressive groups in the Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN, area bears this out.

The study reveals that persons of color in the Twin Cities suffer from a lack of public transportation available to good jobs as well as a “transit time penalty” – which is the additional time it takes to travel between two points by public transportation compared to travel by car. That comes to almost a month per year more for persons of color than white drivers’ travel time to work.

 Forced dependence on cars

According to the study: “Lack of transit exacerbates racial and economic disparities in two ways. First, the lack of transit service forces dependence on costly auto ownership.

“Only approximately 15% of jobs in the Twin Cities region are well served by transit, resulting in working families in the Twin Cities spending more on transportation than on housing.

“Second... The transit time penalty disproportionately impacts communities of color due to the dynamic interplay of geographic segregation and the disparate rates of public transit use.”

This problem is not limited to the North Star State. In fact, “austerity budgets” (that state and municipal governments continue to pass despite the supposed end of the recession) have cut urban transit to such an extent that “transit deserts” have appeared in cities like Detroit where public transportation is desperately needed.

Public sector, transit cuts hurting Black communities

Austerity budgets in the United States have lead to cuts in public sector jobs – jobs that have brought generations of African Americans into the middle class. Many of these jobs (including those in public transit) are being eliminated or outsourced to private employers who pay much less than government.

Take the Ingram family; two generations are working for the Miami-Dade County transit system leading to regular paychecks, and a steady advance up the economic ladder.

Now a third generation is applying to take the transit system test. But, today the competition is tougher and the jobs are a lot scarcer. This decline in public employment has contributed to the struggles of African-American communities.

We need to fix this problem. Until everyone who works hard and plays by the rules has an equal shot at succeeding, income inequality in America will continue.
Toronto transit activists call funding biggest problem

Toronto, ON, is home to one of ATU’s largest local unions. Fare box receipts account for a greater percentage of the Toronto Transit Commission’s (TTC) budget than any other transit system in North America.

And yet, TTC has suffered with insufficient funding since PC Premier Mike Harris pulled the plug on all but capital provincial assistance in 1998. Unfortunately, now, the metropolitan area is paying the price.

Lack of funding

Into this void comes a new breed of political activists intent on improving public transit in the region.

“The number one way we can fix transit in Toronto is to invest money into the system,” asserts Jessica Bell, executive director of TTCriders. “A lot of the problems we face are due to a lack of funding.”

The organization, which is supported by Local 113, was formed in 2010, “as a response to the tens of thousands of transit users who said that they want better transit in Toronto.”

Way back in 2010, the group recognized that the funding model for TTC was unsustainable. And the situation wasn’t getting any better.

‘Fed up’

TTC riders member Barb Willits is direct: “I’m fed up with the poor transit decisions that are being made for the city of Toronto. I started looking around and realized that tons of people are travelling an hour-and-a-half to get to work and then home again. It’s just wrong.”

TTCriders engage in many public activities designed to push the city further along the road to restoring transit and making desperately needed service improvements.

Members go to city council meetings, picket counselors, and spend days leafleting and educating the public about the issue.

Province must do more

Some believe that the province has to go back to providing more funding. Councillor Maria Augimeri reminds people that when she was TTC Chair “We concentrated on making the public aware that there were zero operating dollars coming from the province to keep the TTC sustainable on a day-to-day basis.”

Things are changing, however, Toronto Mayor John Tory has found a way to increase service, and more money may be coming from the federal government.

Whether that funding involves P3 arrangements remains to be seen. In any event, citizens can expect Toronto’s TTCriders to be actively involved in the process. ✤
ATU members and the ATU camel came out in force in June at Newark’s Penn Station against Republican Governor Chris Christie’s plan for steep fare hikes for New Jersey transit riders.

After the event New Jersey State Council Chair Ray Greaves wrote, “today we stood tall and we should all feel proud about what we did! This was just the beginning…”

Local President Martin Heraghty, 824-New Brunswick, NJ, may have captured the spirit of New Jersey members at a previous hearing when he said, “Listen up Gov. Christie: We will not sit down and shut up. We will stand up and fight the hike.”

DC Transit workers address perils of outsourcing on DCTV

Taking their issues and concerns directly to the people of the Washington, DC, metropolitan area, Locals 689 and 1764 have launched a local cable access TV show, “DC Transit Matters” on DCTV. The new enterprise is Washington's only television station devoted entirely to local programming created by and for DC communities.

The inaugural episode features Local President Jackie Jeter and Local 1764 members – paratransit driver Karen Reed and call center worker Lee Wade – talking about how outsourcing paratransit has threatened the safety and service of riders while workers are treated unfairly. The panelists discussed how numerous private paratransit contractors go about putting profits before people and riders.

The first “DC Transit Matters” will run on DCTV throughout the summer. The show is available online at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T Dt3CA npp8. Future episodes will cover a wide range of topics that affect public transit in the Washington area.
ATU HERO

Sharp-eyed CA member saves kidnapped 3-year-old boy

VTA Operator Tim Watson, 265-San Jose, CA, is being called a hero for recognizing a kidnapped three-year-old boy and his abductor on his bus which led to the kidnapper’s arrest and the return of the boy to his family.

‘Lost backpack’

To get a closer look without alarming the kidnapper, Watson pulled the bus over and walked through the aisle looking for a “lost backpack.” He then quickly radioed police, who arrested the kidnapper as he got off the bus at the next stop.

“The bus driver’s a hero, an absolute hero,” say the police, who reunited the unharmed boy with his parents. Watson said that after the arrest, he started thinking of his own kids and broke down.

Watson was one of 750 county bus drivers who took a Santa Clara County training course that helps people recognize the red flags that indicate when a person has been kidnapped or held against their will.

‘Perfect example of a public servant’

“We at Local 265 are proud of Tim Watson. He is the perfect example of a public servant and a union member. He acted quickly and intelligently while keeping his passengers safe and calm,” says Local President Diana Hermone. “Bus operators are the front line workers for transit companies. They save lives and prevent crimes. Thank you Tim for a job well done!”

ATU salutes California bus driver Tim Watson for foiling a child kidnapper.

A three-year-old boy was snatched from a public library and the police sent out an alert for a boy wearing plaid shorts and red shoes. The Local 265-San Jose, CA, member noticed a young man riding his bus with a crying boy who matched that description.

Alert Alameda driver spots ‘at risk’ teen

An alert AC Transit driver helped locate a missing “at risk” teen in Alameda County, CA, this past spring.

Shortly after a family reported the disappearance of their 16-year old son, police sent an alert out through “Nixle”, a notification service that sends alerts to law enforcement, transportation agencies, hospitals and other subscribers.

Just a half hour later the police received a report from an unidentified AC Transit driver who spotted the young man walking down a local street.

Police located the missing boy at the location the bus driver provided, and returned him home, safe and sound.
HALIFAX MEMBER SPENDS VACATION GIVING TO OTHERS

by Financial Secretary Jeannie Garbett, 508-Halifax, NS:

We all know ATU has the best members out there. And we have an exceptional member at Local 508-Halifax, NS, who has gone “above and beyond the call” to give back to the world.

Operator James Penney has a positive attitude and a contagious smile. He collected pallets around the city to help keep his brothers and sisters warm during our last winter strike – a huge gesture in our world.

As “Maritimers,” many of us plan warm winter escapes to the Caribbean every year. We arrive with suitcases full of gifts for the locals in poverty stricken areas. Then it’s back to our four- or five-star resort for the rest of our vacation.

Brother Penney also went to a warmer climate this year – but not to a fancy hotel. He spent his two-week vacation helping the poorest of the poor in a small community sewing room in Haiti.

‘Sew Helpful’

Brother Penney attends Hillside Wesleyan Church in Dartmouth, NS, where the organization “Sew Hopeful,” was founded in 2011. The group teaches women in third world communities how to become seamstresses so they can support their families making and selling their own products. Another team teaches the men carpentry work.

Life in Port Au Prince is more difficult than anything Brother Penney has ever seen. The poverty, he says, is very apparent. There is no running water, and no electricity, but the happiness of the locals is contagious. They are also some of the hardest workers he’s ever seen.

There is a story James tells that will tug your heart strings. He speaks about one of the sewing machines they brought with them that had been packed in a box that originally held a toy dump truck. The children in the village played with the picture on the box for hours and enjoyed every second.

A feeling like none other

Most of the villagers make a living by selling the bags that they were taught to make by Sew Hopeful and have now expanded into making and selling clothes. The pride they show in finishing a product and getting it ready for market is truly inspirational. Brother Penney says the wonderful feeling they shared with the entire team was like nothing else he’d ever experienced.

It was the first time that Brother Penney had been away from his family, and that in itself was difficult, but he said he would return in a heartbeat.

James’s favorite bible quote is one that he has tried to live by every day and is especially important to him as a bus operator – John 13:34-35: “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” He has certainly lived up to this.

Pictured: Operator James Penney, 508-Halifax, NS, right, helps a resident of Port Au Prince, Haiti, show off one of the bags she’s made, and plans to sell, to support herself and her family.
Irish transit workers strike blow against Dublin privatization scheme

‘...GOVERNMENTS IN A CAPITALIST SOCIETY ARE BUT COMMITTEES OF THE RICH TO MANAGE THE AFFAIRS OF THE CAPITALIST CLASS.’

— James Connolly, Irish Transport and General Workers Union (executed by a British firing squad in 1916 for his role in the Easter Uprising)

Irish transit workers scored a major blow against the privateers in mid-May, negotiating a settlement with the government just hours before a second strike was about to shut down bus service throughout the entire country. The deal protects workers as the government prepares to outsource 10% of its routes to private contractors.

Irish political leaders were forced to cancel a plan to privatize the other 90% of service in 2019, and to promise that no current bus worker will be forced to transfer (presumably at lower wages) to a private company or suffer any reduction in pension benefits as a result of the 10% privatization of transit.

Transportation Minister Pascal Donohoe says: “I have always made clear that it is not my intention, or the intention of government, to lead to a situation where the entire bus market is deregulated.”

May Day strike

The unions originally went on strike at 12:01 a.m., on Friday, May 1 – May Day.

Up until the last minute, transit workers were hoping that government ministers would step in and avoid the strike. But, nothing was heard, and the strike commenced, affecting 450,000 passengers a day and the livelihood of thousands of union workers.

The main issue will sound familiar: privatization, which Irish politicians still think will be a panacea to whatever problems private companies tell the government it has – which are none.

But the workers were having none of it, and walked off the job. Commerce suffered because it was the first day of a three-day holiday weekend and many people cancelled their plans to visit the nation’s capital.

This sent Irish ministers scrambling back into talks with the union, and the strike was called off on May 3. But a deal was reached only after another strike was threatened for May 14.

Comprehensive, legally binding agreement

Owen Reidy, construction and utilities organizer for the Services Industrial Professional and Technical Union, says the unions “secured a comprehensive, legally binding agreement. The deal will give legal effect to the assurances workers have received regarding their terms and conditions of employment at Bus Éireann and Dublin Bus.”

The National Bus and Rail Union (NBRU) says that the agreement “goes a long way towards allaying the fears” of its members.

NBRU General Secretary Dermot O’Leary says the agreement has “successfully brought the parties to a point where” the unions were comfortable enough to call off the planned strikes.

For once, there was little union bashing in the media as riders marched with drivers down O’Connell Street, joined by Gerry Adams, the former head of the Irish Republican Army and now a Member of Parliament.
Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper announced the creation of a new Public Transit Fund (PTF), in June.

Just in time for the October national elections, the PTF is designed to provide significant permanent support for large-scale public transit projects to address traffic congestion, reduce travel time for goods and people, and support economic growth in Canada's largest cities.

But there's a catch

Any municipality that wants to build a project including mass transit that would cost more than $100 million must apply for approval by a Crown corporation called “P3 Canada,” which will decide whether the project will be a public-private partnership (P3).

P3s routinely rely on private, non-union employment to lowball the bids submitted to operate transit projects. They always pose a threat to ATU member jobs.

According to the prime minister's office, in order to be eligible for support under the PTF, projects must have a minimum of $1 billion in total estimated eligible costs - obviously more than $100 million.

Federal contributions under the fund will be up to one-third of the total eligible costs and the rest will come from the private sector and alternative funding mechanisms.

The prime minister also announced that funds will be made available within the PTF for Toronto's SmartTrack regional express rail surface line. As currently proposed, the line will provide relief for the overcrowded Yonge-University-Spadina Subway Line and connect Toronto to major employment centres in Mississauga and Markham.

The federal government will contribute up to one-third of the costs for the SmartTrack public transit system proposal, approximately $2.6 billion, once a formal application has been received and approved.

The prime minister revealed that the level of support provided for new project applications under the $2.5 billion P3 Canada Fund currently administered by PPP Canada will increase from 25% to 33.3% of eligible project costs.

P3 calculations ‘highly dubious’

Progressive Conservatives have long advocated P3s, arguing that many public benefits, including saving money, are derived from those arrangements.

Yet, as the Financial Post reports, “John Loxley, an economics professor at the University of Manitoba, opposes P3s and any expansion of them into the municipal sector.”

The argument in favour of P3s has been exaggerated, he says, noting there hasn't been any long-term analysis of benefits. He calls the risk calculations “highly dubious.” He also believes governments pay too much in interest payments and says P3s cut small, local contractors out of the picture.

Harper will try to use Building Canada Fund announcements this summer to help his government win the October 19 federal election. Voters should examine new transit projects closely to see if they rely on private construction and management.
Guelph councilors endorse transit after month on bus

ALLT CALLS PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION A ‘CLASS ISSUE’

Responding to a challenge by a poverty activist, two Guelph, ON, councillors eschewed car travel and took the bus for a month to see how transit dependent people live in their area.

Councillors Leanne Piper and Phil Allt learned a lot from the experience and became enthusiastic supporters of public transit in the process.

Both found that they had to become more meticulous about planning their day, and observed that it just took longer to get where they needed to go.

“The bus is a very social place,” Piper says. “It’s a very friendly community,” agrees Allt. Nevertheless, the councillors recognized the difficulties those who rely on transit experience.

“The current ridership is already on the bus, primarily because they do not have alternatives,” Piper says. “Ridership growth will depend on attracting new users, or car owners, who choose transit as an option for some of their transportation.”

‘Class issue’

Similarly, Allt says, “public transit shouldn’t just be for those who can’t afford a car. Public transit is a class issue, and we need to turn it into a classy issue so that we get more people,” he said, “more middle class people, more upper-middle class people, professionals using public transit because they want to.”

Allt noticed the toll public transit takes on the poor as well. He related one example he saw of a single mother who told him that shopping was a real challenge for her.

“She had to be very careful about what she actually brought with her from the grocery store. She said she could never, ever pick up the great values, because on the one hand she had a child in one arm, another in a stroller,” he said. “The large specials that would have made her life a little easier, say the large jar of peanut butter, the large economy-sized laundry detergent, none of those were accessible to her.”

Allt found that it took so long to get to some places by bus that he preferred to walk or bike to those destinations.

Allt says that change is coming to Guelph public transit. Now that he and Piper have had the experience of relying on it for a month, they will be much better informed about the decisions they make for its future.
TTC power surge shutdown highlights system’s woes

Toronto straphangers got a taste of how bad their already difficult commutes might become if their bickering politicians don’t actually start investing more money into maintenance. A June power surge shut down the subway’s communication network bringing the entire system to a halt.

Domino effect

The vulnerability of the rail line was revealed when backup systems fell like dominoes, one after another.

It all started on a Sunday night when a power surge hit the Hillcrest complex – the site of the Toronto Transit Commission’s (TTC) control centre – forcing the agency to rely on its “uninterruptible” backup power supply.

But, then a circuit board failure caused the backup system’s battery to drain completely, which shut down TTC’s communications system. The subway can’t run without communications, and that left thousands of transit riders stranded until the subway started running again at 7:35 a.m.

It didn’t help that the communications failure prevented TTC from telling passengers what was going on.

Shuttle buses were not brought in to replace the stalled service because there weren’t enough to handle the crush of passengers who would need rides.

Just the latest problem

The shutdown is just the most serious in a long string of subway failures that have plagued TTC. “These things are happening more often than they should in a sophisticated transit system in a big city,” says Mayor John Tory.

Tory says that TTC has assured him that a “thorough investigation” is underway into how the primary and backup electrical and communication systems could fail at the same time.

Uber ‘surge pricing’

An interesting sidebar to the entire incident involved the celebrated Uber “ride-sharing” service, which has been gaining a lot of media attention as an alternative to other more traditional forms of transportation.

Uber ‘surge pricing” (no pun intended) went into effect during the shutdown in which the smartphone app transit company charged up to four times its normal rate.

A company spokeswoman says that as soon as Uber found out about the subway shutdown, they capped their service at just three times their usual charge.

Hamilton Local takes ‘Big Bike’ ride for heart and stroke

Members of Local 107-Hamilton, ON, rode a “Big Bike” through their city at the culmination of their fundraising campaign for heart and stroke research. The “Big Bike” is a unique 30-seat vehicle that those who raise money in the sponsoring organization get to take for a spin around town. Last year over 70,000 riders, in over 200 communities coast to coast, helped raise over $8 million for research.
La citoyenneté du syndicat

Notre histoire est un mystère, peut-être, pour la plupart des membres de syndicats. Comme Fox et d’autres chaînes de comédie poussent la rhétorique antisyndicale, certains membres du syndicat peuvent se demander pourquoi ils sont membres.

Combien de fois ai-je lu une lettre ou répondu à un appel téléphonique commençant par « Je suis un membre cotisant ... »

Cela ressemble à notre citoyenneté. À l’école secondaire, nous avons déjà eu une classe « Citoyenneté », mais, au cours des 40 dernières années, nous avons été redéfinis en tant que CONTRIBUTABLES (l’accent venant du propagandisme d’entreprise.)

Oui, nous payons des impôts, mais cet exercice gouvernemental vise à amasser des richesses communes afin de combler nos besoins mutuels. Nous reviendrons sur ce sujet une autre fois.

En étant membres d’un syndicat, nous faisons partie d’un organisme qui travaille à notre bien commun. Pour le financer, nous payons nos cotisations. Mais c’est là que commence notre appartenance au syndicat, pas où elle se termine.

Nous devons également assister aux réunions, exprimer notre opinion, offrir notre aide lorsque le syndicat en a besoin. Simplement payer sa cotisation n’est pas suffisant.

J’ai récemment entendu un président local s’adresser à ses membres lors d’une réunion syndicale en leur disant :

« Vous êtes assis dans une salle à manger et entendez un membre dénigrer le syndicat. Vous restez hors de la conversation parce que, dites-vous, vous vous mêlez de vos affaires. Le syndicat EST votre affaire! » a-t-elle dit.

Oui, ça l’est.

Si ce syndicat disparaît, les salaires de nos membres vont chuter et les conditions de travail seront entièrement à la merci des patrons. Les patrons travaillent fort pour que cela se produise.

De plus, aux É.-U., on constate l’émergence d’un mouvement de profiteurs. C’est un loup déguisé en brebis, un cheval de Troie conçu pour anéantir le pouvoir des travailleurs. Le droit au travail. C’est une tentative pour briser les chances qu’ont les travailleurs de sortir un jour de la pauvreté et de recevoir un salaire décents pour une journée de travail équitable. Ils le font en essayant de briser les « syndicats ouvriers. »

Dans les 25 États ayant adopté la Loi sur le droit au travail, les travailleurs peuvent bénéficier des avantages d’un syndicat sans payer les cotisations. Cela signifie qu’ils vivent sur les cotisations des autres membres. Mais par-dessus tout, et c’est pourquoi les riches et les sociétés se battent pour un environnement exempt de frais, cela signifie que le syndicat (les personnes qui travaillent) dispose d’un pouvoir limité dans la lutte et la défense des travailleurs.


Au cours de notre histoire, les moments où la sécurité sociale, l’assurance maladie et les salaires minimums ont été implantés étaient lorsque les syndicats étaient forts. Pensions, soins de santé et salaires décents sont des produits de syndicats forts, et non d’entreprises solides. Les cotisations ont aidé, mais c’est l’action des personnes travaillant sérieusement qui a fait la différence.

Ce ne sont pas les costumes et les cravates qui ont obtenu de bons contrats; ce sont les piquets de grève et les grévistes. C’est l’unité de millions de travailleurs qui disent : « Nous voulons une juste part de ce que nous produisons avec notre travail! », qui ont obtenu ces résultats.

Si vous rendez votre histoire moins mystérieuse, vous deviendrez plus que des « membres cotisants... »

La formation des dirigeants et les liens d’amitié renforcent le SUT

Plus tôt ce mois-ci, j’ai rencontré et accueilli un autre groupe de nouveaux dirigeants SUT qui entreprendront bientôt
des négociations contractuelles dans leur ville respective. Ce groupe de 29 participait à notre session sur le coût des contrats qui se tenait au Maritime Center de Baltimore.

Les nouveaux dirigeants sont emballés par les rebondissements connus durant leur campagne électorale; ils sont, à juste titre, ravis de leur victoire. Mais ensuite?

En 1972, un film intitulé Votez McKay (V.F. The Candidate) prenait l'affiche, mettant en vedette Robert Redford. Le film débutait avec Redford, jeune avocat de belle apparence, dont les principes sont de se battre pour les droits des fermiers et d'autres causes progressistes. Une course au Sénat s'annonce pour un siège déjà occupé par un sénateur puissant et bien enraciné. Tous les candidats potentiels ont été intimidés par la cote de popularité du titulaire et l'apparence de son pouvoir. Que peut faire le parti?

Des conseillers politiques d’expérience voient en Redford un candidat télégénique qui a des chances de remporter ce siège. Le père de Redford, maintenant à la retraite, est un ancien gouverneur d'état et pourrait lui donner un coup de main. Mais, Redford hésite à demander l'aide de son père. Il entretient une relation d’amour-haine envers son père qui était un génie des manigances politiques qu’il trouve répugnantes; ces manigances vont à l’encontre des principes qui lui tiennent à cœur.

Que fait-on maintenant?

Mais, les conseillers avisés triomphent. Ils réussissent à convaincre Redford que gagner ce siège au Sénat est pour lui la façon la plus efficace de promouvoir son programme et changer le « statu quo ». Petit à petit, tout au long de la campagne, sous la pression de ses conseillers politiques, le candidat modifie très légèrement ses positions, juste assez pour obtenir une marge de manoeuvre, en esquivant une réponse ici ou un commentaire là. Puis, avec l’intervention de dernière minute de son père, il remporte la victoire.

Vers la fin du film, Redford est à son meilleur, s’inclinant légèrement autour du podium pour établir un contact visuel avec ses partisans, passant sa main dans ses cheveux, portant stratégiquement son poing à sa bouche alors qu’il s’éclaircit la voix avant de prononcer son discours. À la fin du discours, Redford s’éloigne dans le couloir de service de l’hôtel, saisit son conseiller politique principal et lui dit : « Il faut qu’on se parle. »

Il se dirigent dans une pièce vacante où la caméra fait un gros plan du visage de Redford, qui révèle maintenant de l’incertitude. Se rendant compte que la campagne est maintenant terminée et qu’il n’a aucune idée comment gouverner, il demande : « Que fait-on maintenant? »

Les dirigeants nouvellement élus sont facilement entraînés par le sentiment de puissance de leur nouveau poste et par la file de partisans qui semble infinie le soir de l’élection. Puis, le lendemain matin, la question surgit : « Je fais quoi maintenant? »

L’apprentissage n’arrête pas à la porte de la salle de classe

Contrairement à la situation dans laquelle « McKay » s’est trouvé, nos dirigeants locaux reçoivent une formation continue pour les aider à relever les défis auxquels ils ont à faire face tous les jours. Mais leur formation ne s’arrête pas à la porte de la salle de classe. Le temps informel que les dirigeants partagent avec leurs homologues à travers le Canada et les États-Unis ouvre la porte aux discussions, aux échanges et aux débats d’idées, aux expériences partagées et développées.

Ces rencontres contribuent à renforcer l’apprentissage, à former de meilleurs dirigeants et un SUT plus solide. J’apprécie nos discussions et j’ai déjà hâte de participer à plusieurs autres. Les solides liens d’amitié qui s’yissent rendent le SUT encore plus fort.

Le Jour de l’Indépendance

Les Américains savent vraiment comment célébrer le 4 juillet le Jour de l’Indépendance, et cette année n’a pas fait exception. Des millions de personnes ont assisté aux défilés et aux feux d’artifice à travers le pays. Je suis convaincu que nos membres du Nord en font autant à la fête du Canada.

C’est bien beau. Mais, je commence à me demander pendant combien de temps encore nous aurons quelque chose à célébrer.

Partout où je regarde, je vois des citoyens qui perdent leur indépendance. Ils perdent leur pouvoir d’exprimer leur opinion à propos des services que le gouvernement est censé leur offrir. Ils perdent leur capacité de se défendre contre les traitements injustes au travail. Ils perdent leur capacité de se trouver un emploi sûr avec un salaire décent et ils perdent les fonds de pension pour lesquels ils ont travaillé toute leur vie.

Perdre le droit de vote

Aux États-Unis, les pauvres, les personnes handicapées et les personnes âgées perdent effectivement leur droit de
vote. Et une sous-classe permanente de travailleurs pauvres continue de croître alors que ces salariés ne font plus partie de la classe moyenne.

Le corporatisme est une force incorrigible qui dévore la richesse du monde, à tel point que les gouvernements doivent, chapeau en main, quêter les entreprises privées afin d’offrir les services que les gens s’attendent de recevoir du secteur public.

Et lorsque l’entreprise privée prend en charge les services publics, les services publics deviennent les serviteurs de l’entreprise privée. Le bien public passe alors au second plan. Lentement, les entreprises sur lesquelles nous n’avons aucun contrôle commencent à gouverner nos vies.

Dans le secteur du transport, les entreprises multinationales prennent progressivement le contrôle de nos propriétés. Ces conglomérats parasitaires paient des salaires de misère, et offrent des services inacceptables et non sécuritaires afin de recueillir le maximum d’argent des contribuables et l’envoyer outre-mer.

En quoi cela est-il différent des impôts injustes que les Britanniques imposaient aux colonies américaines avant la Révolution? Il n’y a pas vraiment de différence entre la tyrannie d’une multinationale étrangère et la tyrannie d’un gouvernement étranger. Le résultat est le même la pauvreté pour de plus en plus de gens.

Cette sombre perspective peut sembler farfelue pour certains; mais, comment décrire autrement cette prise en charge par des étrangers de nos biens et de nos trésors publics?

Le moment est venu de riposter

Les entreprises se prosternent à l’autel du « libre marché » où il n’y a rien de libre tout est contrôlé par les forces monopolisantes de la mondialisation. Alors, le « cours du marché » est maintenu artificiellement bas et la véritable compétition est écartée.

Étonnamment, nous nous faisons traiter d’antipatriotiques lorsque nous remettons tout cela en question. Ceux qui croient que les travailleurs devraient être payés davantage que le salaire de misère dicté par les marchés se font traiter de socialistes ce qui, vrai ou non, les marque comme étant des ennemis de tout ce qui est bon et saint.


Dans les pages suivantes, vous verrez de nombreux exemples de membres du SUT qui le font. J’espère qu’ils deviendront votre source d’inspiration pour vous joindre à la bataille dans votre communauté.

Vous savez, nous ne nous battons pas seulement pour nos emplois – nous nous battons aussi, comme nous l’avons toujours fait, pour l’indépendance.

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

Death Benefits Awarded March 1, 2015 - April 30, 2015

IN TRANSIT | www.atu.org 31
AMALGAMATED TRANSIT UNION
CONVENTION DELEGATES & GUESTS

SAVE THE DATE

THE 58TH INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION
will be held at
Sheraton Centre Toronto Hotel
October 3 – 7, 2016

Information about Traveling to Canada
An international destination of choice, Toronto is easily accessed by land, water and air. Don’t forget to ensure you have a valid passport at all times. American citizens returning home should also be aware that there are new customs requirements in effect.

For more information, visit the websites of:

Citizenship and Immigration Canada

U.S. Department of State (Passport Information)
http://www.travel.state.gov/content/travel/english.html