

ACTION

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September 5, 1978

A TAKE-AWAY CONTRACT ON MAJOR ISSUES

The arbitration of "major issues" of the new contract, announced at a special union meeting August 30, represent a significant loss on our part. While we held on to the full cost-of-living clause, Metro got their foot in the door on part-time help.

PART-TIME HELP SAVES METRO MONEY, Threatens Job Security

The arbitrator's ruling allows Metro to hire 10% part-time help who will receive no benefits except the uniform allowance and free transportation on Metro. Part-timers will only be allowed to work trippers and are limited to a 30 hour week. They will receive the same wages as regular operators, but will accumulate no seniority in the event they are later hired as regular operators. Another clause states that no full-time employee will be laid off as a result of part-time employment. Part-timers will belong to the union.

By hiring part-time help, Metro hopes to begin breaking up some swing runs and cutting some service. They plan to save lots of money by paying no benefits, by offering less spreadtime and overtime, and by paying part-timers the starting wage rate to work these trippers.

Part-timers will mean that the number of full-time operators will decrease through firings, retirements and those who quit. Metro will probably move quickly to make room for part-timers, resulting in more harassment and firings of full-time operators. In addition, the amount of overtime will decline.

Probably the least visible but most important effect will be the weakening of the bargaining unit. Part-timers will undercut our strength in future contract battles

because these people will not have the same stake as we do. In addition, we are concerned over safety as we feel that part-timers will represent a more unstable work force who will not stay more than a few years and will not gather necessary experience, resulting in more accidents on the buses and probably later on the rail.

Our fight now has to be to hold the line and eventually eliminate part-timers from the contract.

NO BASIC WAGE INCREASE

The arbitrator refused to grant a basic wage increase. The payment schedule of the cost-of-living clause has also been changed to every 2 months, then 4 months, then 2 months, then 4 months, etc. The contract runs for 2 years, expiring April 30, 1978.

NO WIN STRATEGY

When Rodney Richmond announced the contract terms at the special union meeting August 30 at Constitution Hall, he attacked the recent wildcat strike. He stated that arbitration was the best way to resolve disputes and defended the part time provision, saying that if we didn't allow part-timers then Ride-On type outfits would be set up everywhere and at least with part-time these people are in the union. This no-win strategy of our top elected officials must go.

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Attend Sept. 5 Meeting

Oppose Payback Scheme

On July 22, in the middle of the wildcat strike over our cost-of-living raise, the Labor Department informed Metro that the cost-of-living index used since November, 1976 was in error. Shortly after this, Metro announced that employees would have to pay back \$380,000 that had been "overpaid".

Metro management and ATU 689 officials have announced they are negotiating to pay this money back. While the deal has not yet been finalized, according to Rodney Richmond, Secretary-Treasurer of Local 689, it will work something like this: In the future if the cost-of-living rises enough to pay us a 15¢ raise, we would only receive 14½¢ until this money is repaid.

Several questions must be raised here.

1) Has the union investigated whether the "reporting error" in the natural gas component of the cost-of-living index is a real error or if Metro put up somebody to issue revised figures? The timing of the announcement by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the statement in the BLS press release of July 22 stating that "The recalculated all items indexes are being made available today in order to provide the Washington Transit Authority, the Amalgamated Transit Union, and the public with the most accurate information available as soon as possible." raises the question of whether something funny was going on.

2) Why did Metro General Counsel John R. Kennedy make the statement July 25 to the Washington Star that no attempt would be made to recover the "overpayment" and then turn around and attempt to use it as a hostage for the back money due us under the arbitrator's decision?

3) Have the union officials determined if monies paid by the Authority under the contract with the union can legally be taken back, even if a real error has been made?

4) Many workers have been hired and fired since November, 1976. In addition, each of us has a different number of hours and there are several different pay scales- all of which affect any "overpayment". Even if it turns out that an actual error was made and that repayment is legal (it should still be opposed as unfair) - then any money paid back must be calculated for each individual who has worked for the company and statements of these calculations provided to each individual. No across the board pay cuts are acceptable.

ATTEND THE UNION MEETING SEPTEMBER 5.
DEMAND ANSWERS TO THESE QUESTIONS.
OPPOSE ANY DEAL WITH THE AUTHORITY
ON THIS MATTER.

10 AM 8 PM
100 Indiana Ave. N.W. 1st Floor



RECENT JOB ACTION: Was it worth it?

Was the wildcat strike staged July 19-25 worth it? Undoubtedly it was. Several important gains were made.

1. The cost-of-living increase payable beginning July 1 was awarded in the arbitration ordered by Judge Oberdorfer as a result of the strike. The arbitration also clearly defined the sentence on page 7 of the Blue Book to mean just what it says: "All the conditions in this contract shall remain undisturbed during the arbitration proceedings."

2. The job action put Metro on notice that if they openly and flagrantly attempt to violate the contract and deny us our wages or other benefits, they will pay a heavy price.

3. The strike and resulting favorable arbitration put us in a better position going into arbitration of the new contract. Metro had hoped to go into this arbitration without paying any cost-of-living raise so that they could present the arbitrator with a choice: either modify the cost-of-living clause or grant part-time help. Without the strike, Metro might have gotten more than 10% part-timers.

4. The strike built an unprecedented display of unity and determination among the rank and file in the face of a major attack on us by Metro. In the face of real opposition from Metro, the current union leadership, court injunctions against individual rank and file activists, and tremendous pressure from the media to return to work, the rank and file shut down the entire system- all bus barns including Prince George's Division, the rail, unionized employees at OCCB, Silver Spring Maintenance, and the mechanical department which had sparked the strike to begin with.

5. The strike put the current leadership on notice that the rank and file demands that any attack by Metro be fought. We want no more conciliation or deals around issues where we are right. The strike put union leaders on notice that if they expect to be re-elected in December, 1979, they better change their policies quickly.

6. Rank and file organization was increased during the job action. This was the major weakness of the strike and the main reason Metro was able to break the strike- lying to rail operators and bus drivers that the other group was already working. But through the strike we were able to make contact with each other at different depots and departments. In fact, this caucus is a direct outgrowth of the recent wildcat.

On the minus side, we were stampeded back to work before the issue of amnesty was won. Although our determination forced some concessions from Judge Oberdorfer (setting a deadline for Metro to take action against us and a speeded-up grievance procedure), 10 workers were fired, 86 suspended, and more reprimanded because of strike-related activities. For those fired, we must continue efforts to win their jobs back.

Metro and the current union leadership are summing up the strike differently. Metro says the whole thing was stupid and all we did was lose money from the days off work, that others were fired and suspended, that any gains we made were made solely through "established legal procedures." Does anyone seriously believe that the action we took had no effect on the speeded-up arbitration and subsequent favorable ruling? That 17¢ per hour increase might have gone the way of the 13¢ we lost 2 years ago had we not taken action.

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Recent Job Action cont.

The current union leadership says that the only issue in the strike was communists trying to take over the union. Do they seriously expect us to swallow the idea that 2 or 3 guys who call themselves communists duped 4,500 Metro employees into a 7-day wildcat strike to put them in union office? This was never the issue and is only an attempt on their part to divert attention away from their own treacherous role of actively aiding Metro in breaking the strike. It is an attempt to label all those who stand up to them in order to isolate rank and file leaders who might in the future pose a challenge to the Davis leadership from the rest of the union membership.



"Management and labor must cooperate... I'll give the orders and you cooperate by obeying them..."

Impeachment of George Davis Fails

Formal charges of causing dissension within the union were brought against George Davis, President of Local 689, at the August 1 union meeting, but the charges were voted down.

The meeting was packed with over 250 people crammed in the room and another 50 outside, unable to get in. The current union leadership had mobilized many of their friends to pack the meeting, but dozens of people favoring impeachment also showed.

After a motion was made by one of the people fired as a result of the recent wildcat strike, the next person called on by George Davis denounced the fired worker as a communist and stated that the impeachment charges were an attempt by communists to take over the union. Amidst confusion and a lot of noise, preventing many people from being able to hear what was going on, a quick voice vote was taken on whether to bring charges against Davis. Davis then announced from the podium that the vote had failed to receive a 2/3 majority. After another quick vote, the meeting was adjourned. The whole proceedings took fewer than 2 minutes.

Davis escaped impeachment only by railroading the vote, successfully avoiding the real issue and creating a phony one. THE REAL ISSUE WAS WHETHER GEORGE DAVIS IS SELLING OUT THE MEMBERSHIP TO METRO. But Davis succeeded in making it "communist takeover" which scared a lot of people. It was an effective tactic from Davis' point of view but does not let him off the hook.

Over the last 5 years, the George Davis-Rodney Richmond clique has pursued policies which favor Metro. In the recent contract struggle they have:

1. Refused to post copies of Metro's and the union's proposals in the garages and other work areas to inform the membership of contract issues.

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Davis cont.

2. Refused to go to court to force Metro to pay the July 1 cost-of-living increase despite a resolution passed at a union meeting in June directing him to do so.

3. Conducted the July 18 union meeting in such a way as to prevent union members from expressing their views on the floor of the meeting. Davis's conduct at this meeting and his refusal to do anything more than go through lengthy arbitration hearings on the July 1 cost-of-living forced the membership into a wildcat strike to achieve any action.

4. During the strike, Davis admitted in court that he had lied to the membership by telling us through a memorandum that arbitration of the July 1 COLA would be completed by the end of July. Judge Oberdorfer later ordered the proceedings speeded up due to the strike.

5. Went beyond the court order restraining the union in an attempt to break the strike and force us back to work.

6. Railroaded the vote on serious charges of misconduct against him at the August 1 union meeting.

7. Is negotiating with Metro on repayment of the \$380,000 supposedly overpaid us due to an alleged error in the cost-of-living index, despite protests from the membership at the August 15 meeting that the union leadership should fight this payback scheme.

These are a few among the many policies pursued by the Davis-Richmond clique over the last 5 years. They were the real issues in the impeachment charges and will not be forgotten when the December, 1979 elections take place.

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Unity is a Must !

As the struggle between Metro workers and the company grows, Metro has implemented a strategy to divide its older and younger workers on issues we are struggling around.

Younger Metro workers are eager to attain a higher wage increase, while older workers would prefer a better retirement plan. Now is the time to make sure that Metro does not divide our progressive forces over conflicting issues at hand.

The real issue is that Metro workers should be able to receive both a decent periodic wage increase and a better retirement plan.

Metro is able to carry out its divide and conquer strategy because of the existing gap between older and younger workers. Issues such as wage increases and retirement are often used to divide any group that can unite as one.

These issues are also capitalized upon through the use of phrases like "You have to give up something to get something." In reality, we may lose everything in the future unless older and younger Metro employees start putting their heads together as one united front and working together to improve the working conditions in all sectors.

(HOW CAN WE SWINDLE OUR EMPLOYEES... WHO TRUST US SO?)



(HOW CAN WE SWINDLE THEM

IF THEY DON'T TRUST US?)



WHO WE ARE :

This newspaper is published by a group of concerned Metro employees who are tired of being pushed around by Metro management. The caucus was formed to help organize our fellow employees to stand up to Metro's attacks on our standard of living, our job security, and our dignity. We also exist to strengthen our union and to make our union fight in the members' interests.

Please contact us at: