



Amalgamated Transit Union

Local #1576 Newsletter

June 2009

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"The perfecting of one's self is the fundamental base of all progress and all moral development"

Website: www.atu1576.org



President's Report by Kathleen Custer, President/B.A.

I overheard a conversation the other day between two people and believe it or not, they were discussing the 'good and evil of Union's' (when I hear the word "Union" my ears perk up!) One was explaining why he liked Union's and the other was describing why he disliked them.

Bear in mind while reading this, I respect everyone's opinion when it comes to why they believe Union's are bad- (he *must* seek medical attention quick).... But let's continue...

One gentleman was actually saying he thought that Unions were the reason why companies are folding today: that if they just paid them a lesser wage some companies might still be in business. He thought that Unions were bringing us all down because the same work can be done by people making less money!

The other guy disagreed saying that he obviously had never been part of a Union and that if he could Unionize now, he would. Union's were the reason why workers have better working conditions, a living wage, improved benefits for their families and protections that those who are not unionized don't have.

Now, let me share with you a brief story. A close friend of mine recently lost their *non-union* job. It appeared that after almost 20 years with the large retail company; after countless promotions, they told him they simply didn't need him any longer. This man was rated, on a myriad of measurable points among his peers, within the top 3% of the country. He was the force to be reckoned with. His employment file literally consisted of his employment application 20 years ago, and countless commendations throughout his tenure. He was well liked, highly respected and admired and was *the one* to go to when you needed to get the job done. In addition to the out of control 60+ hour workweeks, 24 hour on call status, and the regular travel away from his family, he had no rights or protections within his employment. And, once they let him go they reposted his position with a new job title, half the salary and no significant changes in the job description.

Considering my position with the Union, you can imagine my reaction- file a grievance... appeal the decision... get all the facts and prove to them why they've made a bad decision... unfortunately, it doesn't work that way with non-Union employers. Once the decision is made- hit the road, Jack.

What a shame.

My point is that in a perfect world we wouldn't need Unions because employers would treat employees the way they deserve to be treated; the way they'd want to be treated. They'd pay them a decent living wage and provide benefits at a reasonable cost. Employers wouldn't dismiss valuable employees and would recognize their dedication to an agency. They'd provide respectable working conditions, at no request. In a perfect world, employees would have the protections we all strive for. They'd have an appeal process if a decision was made that employees didn't agree with. And, they'd stop chasing the almighty dollar.

Now, back to the real world.

It's because of Unions we have these protections that others who may not. But Unions are struggling to maintain these rights in order to provide the best working conditions possible. At every turn it seems we are fighting another battle, while we're putting one out, just to maintain status quo. And while it's easy to simply give up and say "we'll deal with it later, we'll get em' next time", there may not be a 'next time'. So we continue to fight for our rights, during grievance hearings, arbitrations, during contract negotiations and in Interest Arbitration. Without this ability, we'd be in the same position as my friend was a few weeks ago.

Fortunately, my friend got right back on his feet, as he always does, and is now employed with a company (although non-union) where he will travel less, work a 40 hour workweek with good benefits and pay, and hope the working conditions will prove better. I wish him luck.

It's hard sometimes for us to remember what it was like at a previous employer. I remember working 50+ unknown (mandatory) hours, nights and weekends, all with no vacation time, no medical benefits and no working protections. When I reminisce on my previous life, I'm so thankful to be part of this Union. I hope you are too.

Vice President's Report by Rick Jurkovic

Employee Free Choice Bill

A shop steward at Community Transit sent me the following article which is a quote from John DiNardo Professor of Economics and Public Policy at the University of Michigan. I went to Google to look him up. He does exist and he is an authority on Union issues. **"Many believe that having a union increases the likelihood of business failure, but the evidence is just not there. In fact, wages don't always even go up when a company is unionized."** These surveys, covering the period 1961-2004, found **"zero correlation"** between a company's being unionized and the likelihood of its failing. DiNardo speculates that what really may cause many corporate managers and business owners to bitterly oppose unionization is not the fear of business failure or even perhaps of higher labor costs, but rather the fear of losing control over workers. **"Business managers in non-union firms are more like monarchs,"** he says. **"With a union, a company becomes slightly more democratic, and the manager becomes more like a president."** That puts the name of the **anti-Employee Free Choice Act business lobbying coalition in an interesting light. Obviously no corporate lobbying organization is actually in favor of democracy in the workplace, as their name deceptively implies.**

This may explain the behavior of the Managements we work for. It seems like they just can't wait to discipline or terminate an employee; they just have to be the boss. I came into this job just because of the disciplines I saw occurring and guess what, they are still occurring. Recently First Transit Corporate Headquarters put out a handbook. President Custer said, "Hey wait a minute, we have the right to bargain disciplines. If anything in this handbook happens to be different than what we have bargained, it simply isn't going to happen." Now, get this, the handbook says coach rollbacks are a "leading cause of preventable accidents". A probationary employee forgot to set her maxi in the yard and the coach rolled but it did not make contact with anything. She jumped back in the coach and secured it. Her next step was to write an event report. Management read the event report and the handbook calls for terminating her. Even though this was a probationary employee, President Custer stepped in and made sure they understood they can't do that.

Last year we had the accident we called "the accident of no accident". A Coach Operator at CT made a left turn as the light turned amber. Someone heading in the other direction tried to beat the light. The problem was the car in front of him had stopped and he rear-ended it. Our Operator didn't even know this accident happened, but another individual said it was CT's fault. CT's vehicle was not involved; no damage was done by CT to anyone's property and no damage to CT's property. In no way did this incident meet CT's own definition of an accident. This battle went on for nearly a year until it was voted on by the membership to take it to arbitration. At the 11th hour, CT reduced the accident to an incident and the Coach Operator was made whole. Now they want to do this all over again. A Coach Operator wrote an event report because someone cut in front of him and he had to dynamite the brakes. The video clearly shows no contact with the other vehicle but the Manager spots white paint on the bumper of the coach and calls it an accident. This was then ruled non-preventable but Management gave the Operator a **major infraction** for not reporting the accident which was done on the event report. The Operator didn't call Dispatch because no contact was made and the other driver drove off. This Coach Operator has worked for CT for one year and has a squeaky clean record. Now he has to have this **MAJOR INFRACTION** on his record **forever** because, in CT's infinite wisdom, there is no roll off of SOP infractions. CT is bewildered that we have such a morale problem. DUH, what do you suppose causes it?

I could go on and on exposing the absurdities I have seen at each of our 4 properties in the last year and a half that I have been Vice President, but I think Professor DiNardo is right. Management is reacting to the fact that the Union steps up and represents the employee. From the Union perspective, if Management wants to mess with our Members, they better have **just cause** and they better handle the issues with **due process and common sense**. I intend to fight these battles with every fiber in me as long as I am your Vice President.

In Solidarity,
Rick M. Jurkovic



Financial Secretary/Treasurer's Report by Patty Ceis

So here comes June already!

June marks at least a couple of significant actions for which I'm responsible as Financial Secretary. For one, there will be postings and sign-ups on all the Union boards for members wanting to be Shop Stewards and for those who want to serve on external committees. The committees vary somewhat at each property, but include Safety, Accident Preview & Review, and S.P.I.T. (Scheduling & Planning Input Team). Shop Stewards are appointed positions and the committee members are elected. Those elections will also be held in June. All positions will be effective July 1.

Also, July 1 will mark the new dues assessments, according to our by-laws, based on the hourly wage of each member as of June 1, '09. That means you will probably see a slightly different figure for dues deductions starting in July depending on whether or not your wages went up since last June. The good news is that the International has not increased the monthly minimum dues and there are no 'per capita' tax increases.

Stay cool and I hope you have an enjoyable summer!
Patty Ceis
Financial Secretary/Treasurer



Commentary by John Sainz, Recording Secretary

On April 23rd our Members at First Transit Everett held an election to fill an opening for Executive Board Officer. The winner was John Bismore. Congratulations to John and I appreciate his willingness to step up and serve his fellow Union Members. I also wish to thank Lana Weaver for running. Her decision to run for a higher office shows her dedication to serving her co-workers as well. It is much appreciated.

I read Todd Morrow's article in the Community Times. Nice to read about all the funding for capital projects, like the new Double-Deckers. One would think that would free up the funds CT had allocated for these items to be transferred to their operational budget for such items as say, 100% paid Healthcare for ALL of CT's units.

Another subject Mr. Morrow mentioned was some bills that would have had an impact on CT (the implication is "negative" impact). The first item mentioned were the bills that would have caused CT to expand their board. What Mr. Morrow failed to mention was that these bills would have required all Transit Boards statewide to include a member of LABOR on their boards (no cost to the companies, except to include copies of all documents for the Labor member). The State House's version would have given Labor a VOTE on the boards and that's the part that terrified CT and the other Transit Agencies. No more giving board members one-sided, mostly inaccurate information by Transit CEO. Labor would be there to set the record straight and ensure it's issues were properly explained.

Recently, a member of Management reported a coach had made an unsafe lane change in front of them on Seaway Ave headed for SR526. This person also reported the coach was doing 60 mph by the time it reached the interchange. Problem was, it was determined that the alleged coach was in Seattle at that time and the person filing the report had now admitted, in writing and signed, that they would have been going 20 mph over the speed limit as well. The comment was filed as unsubstantiated. The point is: Watch your speed on Seaway, it's only 40 mph.
(cont. on Back Page)

Job Title by Rick Billingsley, Executive Board Officer, FT Everett

Let me lay something on everyone who is a Driver. I'm sure everyone of us in this industry at one time or another has thought that this job that I have is not as cracked up as it used to be. If you've never thought that, you're kidding yourself.

Picture this scenario. You are going to a class reunion and you're so excited about going to see your old classmates and friends, and maybe an old high school sweetheart. You start talking about the good old times and laughing and having a good time. Then the big question pops up. "So what are you doing for a living?" You stand there and pause for a second and you say "I'm a Professional Coach Operator". Your friends look at you with this puzzled look on their faces remembering that in the high school year book, it said that you were most likely to succeed. They realize that your job title is an elaborate way of saying "I'm a bus driver". It would kind of make the rest of your evening a little weak.

Don't get me wrong. I'm not writing this to make you feel insecure about your job. So, let me get to the point. Yes, we are Bus Drivers. But, look at it this way. You work for a major company that specializes in transportation. So, let's break it down:

1. Management- Makes all the decisions regarding the company.
2. Supervisors- In charge of Operations out in the field.
3. Sales- Sells passes, tickets and distributes information to the public.
4. Maintenance- Repairs the buses when they need to be fixed.
5. Trainers- Trains the Driver to drive the bus.
6. Drivers- Carriers passengers to and from their destination.

If you really think about it, the Driver should be at the top of the list. Without Drivers, all of those people above you on that list would not have a job. You are the Manager on the bus. You are the Salesman on the bus. What I mean by that is you are the happy, smiling face on the bus. You greet your passengers every day with a warm welcome. They feel good about the ride they get on the bus. They tell someone who doesn't normally ride and the next time that person gets on the bus.

Personally, I love driving my bus. I look in my mirror and see my passengers sleeping while I take them to work or to home. That tells me they feel safe and that they are comfortable with my driving. All it takes is one passenger to walk up and as he or she is getting off the bus to say "Thanks for the nap. You're a good driver". I don't know about you, but that would make me feel pretty good about myself.

In closing, let me just say we are in a league of our own, people. The next time somebody asks you that question, stand there and be proud and say "I AM A BUS DRIVER".



First Transit Lakewood by Laura Sandoval, Executive Board Officer, FT Lakewood

I would like to welcome all our new Drivers. If you have any questions regarding the Union, please feel free to ask Roy Ott, Tony Digilio or myself.

Drivers, please, if you have questions or concerns, let me, Roy or Tony D. know. We can't help you if we don't know what's going on. You can write it up on an ATU Memo. Please don't just write up what's happening, but also your name. Otherwise, we don't know who to respond to!

We are still working on our language in our negotiations. President Custer and Vice President Jurkovic are continuing to work with Roy and myself and International Vice President Don Hansen. We have two days set in June and three more during the second week in July. Hopefully, we will make some progress by the end of these next five meetings.

Thanks,
Laura Sandoval



"Happiness lies in the joy of achievement

and the thrill of creative effort."

Officer Contact Information

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Upcoming Charter Meetings

Please Note: These dates have changed

Sunday June 28, 2009 @ 1:00 P.M.

(2810 Lombard, Everett)

Sunday June 28, 2009 @ 5:30 P.M.

(IBEW Hall, 3049 S. 36th, Tacoma)

Tuesday June 30, 2009 @ 10:00 A.M.

(2810 Lombard, Everett)

Amalgamated Transit Union

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WEINGARTEN RIGHTS

“If this discussion could in any way lead to my being disciplined or terminated, or affect my personal working conditions, I respectfully request that my Union Representative, Officer, or Steward be present at this meeting. Without representation present, I choose not to participate in this discussion.”

Commentary (cont. from Page 3)

Is your medical card up for renewal? Has your CDL expired? Please take a moment to check them and make a note of the date they expire.

If you are required to have them, you must have a valid med card and a current CDL to be able to drive a coach. There were approximately two dozen expired med cards discovered at the Shakeup. You can be removed from work if you are found to have expired paperwork.

Also, did you fill out the Pre-Trip Inspection Book and turn in the white copy before you left the yard or check the book when you took over the coach at the first safe opportunity?

All three of these are federally required documents with very stiff penalties for non-compliance. There are three things Law Enforcement will ask the Commercial Driver (you, the Coach Operator) for at an accident scene: **#1-Your CDL**, **#2-Your Medical Certificate** and **#3-The Pre-Trip Inspection form**. You have big problems if the med card or license has expired or the Pre-Trip Inspection hasn't been done. There are some exceptions to general transportation regulations for Transit.

These forms are not on that list!!!!

Enjoy life. Have a safe summer.

In Solidarity,
John.

