Conductors and Tower Operators have a chance to send a message to management and to Local 100’s leaders when we vote for the vacant Executive Board position representing the department.

Almost six months have passed since Local 100’s leaders conspired with management to lie about their latest contract. Their flyers promoting the deal promised that it had “No Givebacks! No Concessions of Any Kind!” But we now know that it included a new limit on how much banked overtime we can use as days-off each year – a concession that new hires has forced management to hold off implementing it.

Local 100’s leaders also promised us an above-inflation raise but instead stuck us with a deal that sees our wages continue to fall behind the rising cost of living. And the contract entrenched the Tier 6 pension plan that tripled pension deductions for new hires (in effect a massive pay cut) and gave management a new incentive to harass workers with seniority into retiring.

Meanwhile, management continues to harass members on the job, pushing us to work harder for less, pressuring us to retire sooner, disciplining us over petty uniform rules, frequently requesting new hires and women employees for the worst treatment while pressuring all of us to work in conditions that are often oppressive and even unsafe.

What to Look For in a Candidate

Transit workers are sick and tired of the TA getting away with murder, and of our own union leaders lying to us while they enjoy their highly-paid positions away from the stress of actual hard work.

We need a representative on the E. Board who:

★ has a proven commitment to telling members the truth about what’s going on inside the union and what management is up to;
★ has worked consistently for years to support members in their efforts to stand up to management harassment;
★ isn’t running for office as a career move toward financial reward or notoriety, but because he wants to use the position to encourage workers’ collective empowerment through struggles for justice; and
★ who has fought for the union to not just defend its members, but for it to also support broader struggles for social justice like the Black Lives Matter protests against racist policing, the movement of protest the racist authoritarian Trump in the White House, and protests against MTA fare hikes that hit the riding public and set transit workers up to look greedy when we fight for a better contract.

With his ten-year record of speaking truth to power, supporting co-workers in their resistance against management, (continued on back)

"Fix" Tier 6? What about a Real Strategy to Kill it!

Every time there’s a union election, candidates promise to deliver improvements for the members. This election, special attention is on the hated Tier 6. It worsened the already terrible treatment of new hires, hitting them with a massive pay cut by tripling their pension deductions, locking them into an even deeper second-class status. And it gave management a new incentive to harass workers with seniority into retiring or retiring so far, that but that could quickly change.

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The origins of Tier 6 can be traced to Wall Street lobbying politicians to stop directly funding transit projects. Tier 6 is just such an injustice, like all tiers that lock one group of workers into second-class status. Indeed when workers hate something as much as they do Tier 6, often the only way union bosses and management can hope to save their grip on power is by promising to reform it, at least a little. And that’s all the Samuelsen leadership is doing. They lobbied the politicians in Albany to eliminate the cap on pensionable OT – while leaving intact the three-times greater pay check deduction for Tier 6 pensions, which is the big hit! But without organizing a struggle to back up that demand, the politicians ignored them.

On the other hand, the “Progressive Action” and “Transport Workers United” opposition to Samuelsen & Co. say they want to “reform” Tier 6. PA especially has a number of Tier 6 members who no doubt really do want to reform it, if not get rid of it, including their candidate in the current Conductor/Towers Executive Board election. But they’ve only explained what reforms they want or how they think they can be won. Until they do, their talk of reform Tier 6 will be no different from the typical empty promises of would-be union bosses who say “elect me and I’ll make things better.” That approach means they can’t be held accountable for specific promises and the members are left powerless, unable to do anything besides hope that things get better.

The Truth About Tier 6 and Wall Street

The origins of Tier 6 can be traced to Wall Street lobbying politicians to stop directly funding transit projects and instead issue bonds for financiers to buy. That’s meant that the government ended up having a massive debt to Wall Street that they have to pay interest on. When New York’s Democratic Governor Cuomo had to find more than $90 billion just to service that debt, he immediately looked to raid municipal employees’ pensions to get the money.

That’s when Local 100 President Samuelsen convinced us to have called on all municipal workers’ unions to unite in a struggle to defend our pensions from Cuomo and the Wall Street vultures. Instead, Samuelsen & Co. stabbed us and the state’s and city’s municipal workers in the back by agreeing to Tier 6. So now we know that to change Tier 6, we’ll be up against Wall Street and all the politicians that serve them, Republican and Democratic. So it will take a huge struggle to win significant improvements. But transit workers make this city run, and we have the power to shut it down to defend and improve our conditions. And we can also see that we have hundreds of thousands of potential allies in the rest of the state’s and city’s workers who have also been hit by Tier 6 pension “reform.” We could all be united in a powerful struggle, especially if our union had a leadership prepared to take the lead.

Furthermore, to win such big battles we’ll need the support of the public. That’s why we need a leadership that mobilizes the union’s resources to support all struggles for social justice. John Ferretti, along with other supporters of Revolutionary Transit Worker, campaigned with leaflets and motions in division meetings for Local 100 to throw its resources behind and mobilize for the Black Lives Matter protests against racist police killings, the protest movement against Trump, and protests against fare hikes that hit the working-class riding public and set transit workers up to look greedy when we fight for a better contract. Meanwhile the Samuelsen leadership ignored these calls and did as little fighting as possible, even as our union had a leadership prepared to take the lead.

What a difference it would make to have a candidate like Ferretti on the Executive Board! It would mean having a voice for the only strategy that could really challenge Tier 6 and the other injustices transit workers face. And it would mean having a voice that supports all the struggles of working-class, poor and oppressed people!
John Ferretti for Executive Board!
(continued from front)

and fighting for the union to mobilize in defense of the entire working class, John Ferretti has proven that he has those qualities.

On the other hand, one of the candidates in this election, Crystal Young, appeared on Samuelsen’s lying propaganda that claimed our contract contained “no givebacks.” She worked to sell Samuelsen’s contract and claimed to have no idea about the OTO giveback, and refused to come out against the rotten deal! Other candidates supported the contract or did little to oppose it.

The exception is Progressive Action’s candidate Antonio DeValle. Like John, PA opposed the contract and Antonio probably means well, but like most transit workers, we’ve never heard of him before. An -

Samuelsen’s contract and claimed to have no idea about the OTO giveback, but refused to come out that he has those qualities.

(continued from front)

Most recently, John played an important role in challenging the betrayals of Local 100’s leaders, especially through his role with fellow socialist transit workers in producing Revolutionary Transit Worker newsletter.

The Recent Victories of Conductors at Grand Central

Most recently, John played an important role in supporting conductors at Grand Central Platform Conductor Baez, a Platform Control Supervi -

sion, so Cuomos’s pension giveback, for example, was made so that Cuomo could afford to Pay Wall Street more than $30 billion in debt servicing payments. This confirms that while transit workers do not build the power today in Washington, John and his fellow so -

cialists have not hesitated to explain that the Demo -

cratic Party functions as the capitalist class’s “soft cops” who use their allies in the leadership of this country’s unions to keep the working class and poor passive while enforcing a gradual worsening of living standards for the working class.

This is especially important for transit workers to understand since it is Democratic Governor Andrew Cuomo who is the MTA’s ultimate boss, and his at -

tacks on transit workers have been driven by his loy -

alty to the capitalist class. The Tier 6 pension giveback, for example, was made so that Cuomos could afford to Pay Wall Street more than $30 billion in debt servicing payments. This confirms that while transit workers do not build the power today in Washington, John and his fellow so -

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cratic Party functions as the capitalist class’s “soft cops” who use their allies in the leadership of this country’s unions to keep the working class and poor passive while enforcing a gradual worsening of living standards for the working class.

That’s why John and his fellow socialist transit workers have argued that the working class needs a political party that bases itself on their struggles and challenges the two parties of this country’s capitalist ruling class. And they are clear that they believe that the continued existence of capitalism, the exploita -

tions of life under capitalism, and of working-class and oppressed people’s struggles in defense of their interests, will convince growing numbers of workers that the party they need must stand for a revolution that ultimately overthrows the capitalist system entirely.

RTW’s conversations with our fellow transit workers about capitalism and socialism will con -

tinue. But our immediate message is simple. Con -

ductors and Tower Operators need a representative on the Executive Board who can be trusted to keep them informed and be a voice for solidarity and struggle against attacks by management and the political bosses who have betrayed their interests. The party they need must stand for a revolution that ultimately overthrows the capitalist system entirely.

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