

The Transport Workers Union  
of America *United Invincible*

**twu.org**

# PEOPLE ARE FIGHTING BACK

**Workers' Rights Are Human Rights**  
TWU 2011 COPE LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE







by International  
President  
**James C. Little**

# the fairness **DEFICIT**

Much has been in the news lately about the need to fix our nation's ballooning budget deficit. While that concern is long overdue, I'm convinced we need to pay some attention to a more worrisome problem, something I'll call the fairness deficit.

Put simply, it's the call for average Americans to make more and more sacrifices, while the rich and big corporations get a free pass. It can be seen in the current demonizing of public workers, while obscene Wall Street bonuses are greeted with a yawn. It was heart wrenching to read a *Washington Post* article about a couple, an Ohio firefighter and a nurse, who once felt they were respected members of the community, but are now cast as greedy pariahs.

It's interesting that conservative politicians feign great concern over the deficit, but still fight to maintain, and increase, tax breaks for the rich. I recently saw some instructive facts on taxes. One was that the Bush tax cuts added \$1.7 trillion to the nation's debt during the years from 2001 to 2007. That's more than enough to send 24 million kids to four-year universities! Corporate income taxes only equal about 1 percent of Gross Domestic Product, 60 percent less than the rate of 40 years ago. Major corporations like GE and Exxon Mobil finagle to pay 0 percent taxes. Meanwhile, we tax income generated by wealth at lower rates than income from work. All these figures point to a serious fairness deficit. The budget debate is really a moral issue — who matters more our children or big corporations?

While I understand President Obama's need to compromise with Republicans on a budget deal, I was dismayed that the details included cutting back on money to mass transportation, which is an investment in jobs and our future.

I was heartened however by Obama's response to Rep. Paul Ryan's deficit reduction plan, which seeks to balance the budget on the backs of workers and the elderly, while continuing tax breaks for the wealthy. Obama pledged that he wouldn't follow a path that leads to lost jobs and a national decline of standards.

The President also made clear that he understands why Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid are so important to working people. As AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka said, "The labor movement is equally clear that we oppose cuts to any of these critical programs — no matter who proposes them."

## A SHAMEFUL BUDGET PROPOSAL

The labor movement believes that America must focus on job creation not only because it's the right thing to do, but because it is the key to making long-term deficit reduction both easier and more politically achievable.

Ryan's budget proposal is a shameful wealth transfer from working people to corporate CEOs. Actual deficit reduction would be minimal, with most of the savings going to finance tax cuts for the richest Americans. At the same time, Ryan's plan would turn Medicare into a voucher system with seniors paying for private insurance plans that would cost much more for the same coverage that Medicare now provides.

We cannot have an honest conversation about the deficit until we return fairness to our tax system. We must close corporate loopholes and insist that corporations and the rich pay their fair share instead of shortchanging education, health care, technology and other investments in our future. In other words, we need to start addressing the fairness deficit before we address the budget deficit.

## WHO'S FIXING YOUR PLANE?

Finally, safety concerns about foreign aircraft maintenance are starting to get some traction in the press. In my recent letter published in *The New York Times*, I called on Congress to pass a FAA Reauthorization bill that includes robust oversight and uniform standards on foreign aircraft repair facilities.

Members of our Union who repair aircraft at American Airlines are subject to background checks, professional certification and routine drug and alcohol tests as well as regular FAA oversight of their work. The public should expect no less of workers engaged in critical repair work on planes that fly hundreds of millions of passengers a year.

But there are no comparable requirements for personnel in overseas repair shops. The sad truth is, that's one of the reasons most of the other major airlines are locating their maintenance work to other countries. They want to avoid the rigors of FAA inspection and high standards of security.

Since the airlines are unwilling to fix this problem, Congress should fix it for them. The current FAA authorization bill, now moving through Congress, must include language calling for routine, unannounced inspections of any aircraft repair shop that works on planes operated by United States carriers — no matter where in the world those shops are located. There are no tow trucks at 30,000 feet.

Lastly, as you can see within this issue we have been working diligently on a number of strategic campaigns: "We are One" and "Workers Rights = Human Rights." I want to personally thank our Locals and members who have participated in these ongoing events.



The struggle for the middle class and democracy in America. **page 12-13**

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Cover photo by Steve Schar

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# Transportation Unions Commit to International Solidarity

TWU co-hosted an international meeting on March 31 and April 1 of delegates from 11 countries on addressing the multi-national transit company Veolia, which has been associated with attempts to drive down wages and eliminate defined benefit pension plans.

Veolia, a French based company, has been rapidly expanding into the transport sector in the United States and Canada, TWU represents Veolia employees in Winston, Salem North Carolina. Recently,

Veolia has been bidding for work on TWU represented properties in New York and Houston. Other transit unions, the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) and the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT), represent Veolia employees at several locations around the country.

At the conference, co hosted by IBT and ATU, the participants made a strong commitment to collaborate in solidarity to confront Veolia and protect decent jobs.

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# who's behind the attacks ON LABOR?

The “tea party” movement is owned lock, stock and barrel by billionaires. No wonder they’re attacking the labor movement!

In the 2010 Citizens United decision, a right wing majority on the U.S. Supreme Court decided that corporations have a “free speech” right to unlimited “independent expenditures” on “electioneering communications” advocating the election or defeat of a candidate. This opened the floodgates of corporate campaign spending and funded the “tea party” takeover of a majority of state legislatures, Governor’s mansions and the U.S. House of Representatives. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce alone spent \$32 million on the 2010 election, followed by three other conservative, anti-union corporate front groups.

The “tea party” is about as far away

as one can get from a grass roots movement of ordinary Americans. The two main organizations that provide logistics and organizing support for the tea party movement: Americans for Prosperity (AFP) and Freedom Works. Both of these organizations are a right-wing think tank ran by conservative lobbyists.

AFP is funded by an oil company called Koch Industries, billionaire David Koch is Koch Industries’ Executive Vice President and the Chairman of the Board of the AFP Foundation. He is also one of the co-founders of AFP. The Claude R. Lambe Foundation, which is also controlled by the Koch family, has donated more than \$3 million to AFP. Freedom

Works has received nearly \$3 million in funding from a foundation financed by the Mellon family industrial, oil and banking fortune.

The demographics of the tea party movement reflect its funders. They are overwhelmingly wealthier and more con-

*The “tea-party” is about as far away as one can get from a grass roots movement of ordinary Americans.*

servative than the rest of America. According to a New York Times/CBS News poll, “Americans who identify themselves as Tea Party supporters tend to be Republican, white, male, married and older than 45. They hold more conservative views on a range of issues than Republicans generally... Tea Party supporters over all are more likely than the general public to say their personal financial situation is fairly good or very good.”

So it is hardly surprising that the first thing on the agenda of every newly-elected conservative (and some not-so conservative) Governor and legislature has been to cut taxes for the rich, bust unions, cut services, deny the science of climate change, and make the rest of us pay for it. Know your enemy!

*TWU leaders signed a letter delivered to the Koch brother's office in Washington, DC calling on them to get their money out of politics.*





## L.A. WORKERS RALLY FOR OUR COMMUNITIES, OUR JOBS

Southern California working families rallied for workers' democratic rights on Saturday March 26th. Thousands of union activists, retirees, community leaders, students and teachers came to Los Angeles to send the message — "Our Communities, Our Jobs." Tens of thousands of people marched and rallied in Pershing Square, where labor and community leaders addressed the crowd.

A TWU contingent with members wearing tee shirts and bandannas, carried a large banner and signs reading: "Workers' Rights Are Human Rights," while Local 502 President Donny Tyndall led marchers' chants with a bullhorn.

"I'm here to support all the unions, we have to stand as one," said Robert Williams, a Fleet Service crew chief working at American Airlines for over 22 years.

Local 564 Executive Board member Bill Houseman and wife Julie drove all night from Tucson to get to LA in time for the march. "If union workers don't make a stand right now, with what's going on across the country, there won't be good paying secure jobs for future generations," Houseman said as he marched. He added, "If we allow this to happen, the labor movement is going backward, over 50 years, while the economy goes forward leaving us in the dust."



# Texans Rally for Education, Jobs and Public Services

In Texas union members, activists and working people have been protesting the agenda of Republican Governor Rick Perry to defund public programs and to stand in solidarity with workers in states like Ohio and Wisconsin.

Nearly 500 TWU and other union members gathered at the Texans Day of Outrage on March 15 outside of city hall in Houston to speak out against Republican Gov. Rick Perry's agenda of slashing services and laying off workers, and to advocate for healthcare and education.

"We were rallying to protest legislation that is going to hurt working people and to show solidarity with other states. The event was very positive and they got our message," said Darryl Wright, a bus mechanic with TWU Local 206. "We just need to keep getting the word out and holding more rallies."

According to Sandra Burleson, TWU Director of Human Rights and Women's Committee, the demonstrations are a chance to bring awareness to teacher lay-

offs and spread the message that what is happening in Wisconsin and Ohio could happen in Texas. "This was about building unity and making people aware of what is going on," said Burleson.

As the event got started, a group of counter protestors tried to interfere with the peaceful gathering and a Tea Party activist tried to rush the podium and hit members of the crowd.

However, the disruption failed to dampen the rally or provoke violence, instead the crowd was energized to keep building the movement for workers' rights and to stand up against hatred and fear.

"The Tea Party's actions were promoting hate that we don't need in America," said Wright. "Freedom is not handed to us. We can't be complacent. We need to struggle for anything that is worthwhile."



*Nearly 500 TWU and other union members gathered at the Texans Day of Outrage on March 15 outside of city hall in Houston to speak out against Gov. Perry's agenda of slashing services and laying off workers.*







# Ohio SB5 Protests

The steps of the Ohio statehouse in Columbus have been crowded as rally after rally has attracted thousands of demonstrators opposing the union busting Senate Bill 5 backed by Republican Legislators and Gov. John Kasich. Across Ohio, TWU members have been taking part in marches, demonstrations, vigils and townhall meetings to mobilize grassroots opposition to SB5.

On March 31, Kasich paid back his corporate CEO funders by signing the anti-collective bargaining SB 5, but the fight is only just beginning because Ohioans are putting the law to a referendum and letting the people decide. The law will not go into effect if 231,000 Ohioans sign a petition before July 1 to put it on the ballot in November.

On April 9, 2011, over ten thousand union members, community activists and middle-class people assembled at the statehouse to kick off the referendum campaign. TWU members from rail and transit Locals in Ohio were out in force to get energized about repealing the bill and are planning "train the trainers" sessions. Winning this fight is a major priority for the TWU and the whole labor movement.

In some ways, SB 5 is worse than the Wisconsin law. It restricts the bargaining rights of all public employees, including firefighters and police officers. Public workers would no longer be able to negotiate health care benefits or most working conditions and would be barred from striking. On the few issues workers would still be allowed to "negotiate," management, not a neutral arbitrator, would



make the final decision. The state and local governments and school districts would be able to nullify union contracts by declaring a fiscal emergency.

"The bill in Ohio should be called the bill for the rich and the barely hanging on because there will be no middle-class or poor, only the barely hanging on," said Andrew Jordan, President of TWU Local 208.

That's why thousands have been inside and outside the capitol chanting, "Kill the Bill" and "Shame," and holding rallies and town hall meetings all over the state to demonstrate the widespread opposition to this draconian bill.

"It's time for us as Americans and as workers to stand up and take charge and fight for what we got. We are done getting stepped on," said Harold Markey, Jr. President of TWU Local 2011.



*From top: TWU members join the massive protests against SB5 at the state capitol in Columbus, OH; Local 2019 shows solidarity with public sector workers; Local 208 in Columbus, OH has been on the frontlines of the fight against SB5.*



Local 512 marching through the streets of Madison, Wis.

## TWU SHOWS SOLIDARITY IN WISCONSIN

When Wisconsin's newly elected Republican Gov. Scott Walker, without warning, introduced a bill in February that would strip collective bargaining rights from public workers he sparked a mass grassroots movement that hasn't been seen since the 1960s.

TWU members from Wisconsin, Illinois, Texas, Nebraska, New York and Connecticut representing all TWU divisions came to Wisconsin to show support and join the historic moment.

"I wouldn't miss this protest for the world," said Theotis James, International Representative from Columbus, Ohio. "This is real people power and this is what democracy looks like."

From Local 100 in New York City, Recording Secretary Benita Johnson and Administrative Vice President Angel Giboyeaux, gave a rousing speech to the packed statehouse rotunda, telling the crowd that TWU stands with Wisconsin workers in their struggle and that people are turning the events in Wisconsin into a national movement. "Wisconsin you have woken up the entire country. We, the people, have to continue this fight," said Johnson.



TWU contingent on the steps of the Wisconsin Statehouse.





# the fight for **WORKERS' RIGHTS**



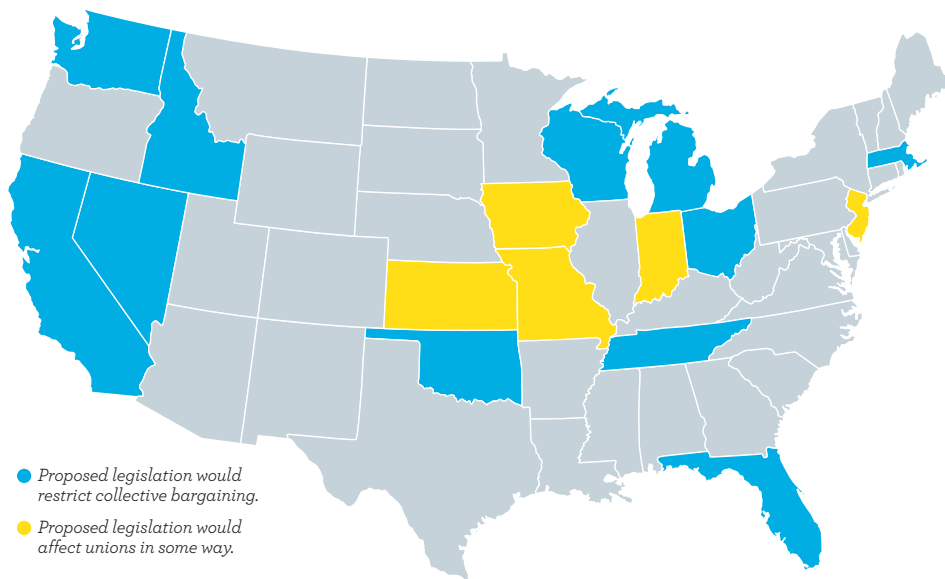
TWU and people across America mobilizing to defend democracy and the middle class.

America is at a defining moment in its history and in a struggle for the soul of the nation as a wave of attacks on workers' basic rights and democracy are being launched across the country.

At the national level, budget cuts are being used to attack the public good and slash vital programs like transportation and health-care. Meanwhile, over 20 states are pursuing coordinated anti-worker agendas that will devastate the middle-class, strip workers' of their power and decimate public services. Laws being proposed in states like Ohio and Wisconsin would cut the head off the labor movement. But workers, community members and students are standing up and mobilizing a movement to fight back.

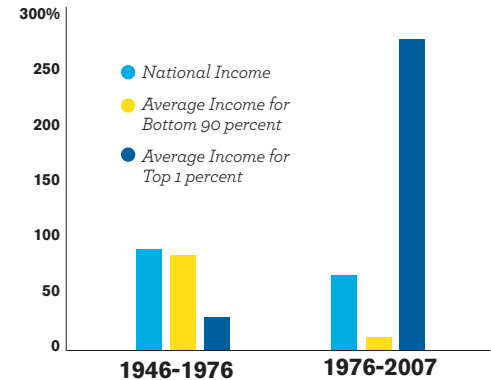
The massive protests that began this past February in Wisconsin have sparked the imagination of the American people and inspired





## SKYROCKETING INCOME INEQUALITY

Source: CBPP calculations based on data from Piketty & Saez, BEA, and the Census Bureau.



millions of ordinary people across the country to stand up to the corporate agenda that is trying to move America backwards and create a society of haves and have-nots dominated by big business. This moment has captured the labor movement's attention and brought renewed energy, motivation and a shared sense of commitment to fight back.

Public workers in all but a handful of states fought for decades and won a voice at work through collective bargaining. But this year, anti-union legislation has been introduced in at least twenty states, such as Wisconsin, Ohio, Indiana, Iowa, Missouri, New York, New Jersey, Florida, Pennsylvania, Nevada, Oklahoma and Michigan. Governors of more states are seeking major concessions from their public employee unions.

Eliminating collective bargaining and permanently weakening unions would leave all working people, not just union workers, completely defenseless and at the mercy of the rich. It is a drive to make all working people voiceless and defenseless while increasing the gap between the rich and the poor. The CEOs at the top companies averaged a 26 percent pay raise last year and pocketed \$11.4 million, yet teachers, sanitation workers and bus drivers are being demonized as overpaid when workers' wages are actually declining and the rich are taking even more of the pie.

"The Governors in our country who are calling for the nation to recover its economy on the backs of workers are in fact nothing less than plantation owners," said Rev. James Lawson, Civil Rights Organizer, at an April 4 event in L.A.

Right-wing Governors and politicians in Washington are using budget deficits as a smoke screen for busting unions and privatization. Governments are facing budget shortfalls because of the economic crisis caused by greedy financial speculators and Bush-era tax cuts on the wealthy. Now, those same politicians and Wall Street bankers that caused the economic crash want to balance the budget on the backs of working people while giving more handouts to the wealthy. In their ruthless radical agenda they want to cut funding for women's healthcare, let polluters contaminate the air and water and slash job-creating infrastructure investments.

The budget debate is really about who society prioritizes—working people or the ultra-rich. Will America become a plutocracy run for and by corporations or will there be a government for and by the people with jobs, education, transportation and healthcare for all?

TWU members see the ugly concerted offensive being waged against working people by rich and greedy conservatives for what it is: a deadly serious attempt to strip working people of their voice and any ability to organize.

TWU will continue to act in solidarity with workers under attack in Wisconsin, Ohio and every other state where billionaire-funded politicians are conspiring to strip workers, students and immigrants of the same rights Dr. King fought and died for.

The action is only just beginning. We cannot go back to sleep now. We have to build the fight back and move on the organizing challenges facing us. We have referendums to get on the ballot, politicians to get unelected, streets that need to be filled with protesters and contract battles that need to be fought and won.

America is at historic crossroad that will ultimately determine America's future and the values that direct this country. One path will be based on greed and exploitation and result in rising inequality, soaring rates of unemployment and growing corporate power. The other path will restore the values of justice and equality by rebuilding an economy with good jobs that provides for all and greater democracy.

Americans must take a united stand against the anti-worker politicians in all states and in the Federal government who would strip hard-earned collective bargaining and human rights from public workers and, eventually, all workers. Gov. Walker and the tea party movement should be thanked for having woken up the sleeping forces of democracy and justice in this country.

We might not have the money that Wisconsin Gov. Walker's billionaire supporters have, but we do have people power and the know how to mobilize for equality and justice. The voice of working people is starting to turn the tide.



# *workers' rights are* **HUMAN RIGHTS**

Hundreds of TWU activists attend conference in Washington, DC.

**A**s the legislative attacks against labor continue to mount, a new urgency has emerged for unions to fight back and stop the anti-worker agenda growing in the U.S. Congress and in more than 20 statehouses. During this pivotal political moment, the 2011 TWU Committee on Political Education (COPE) Legislative Conference was held in Washington, D.C. on April 5-7 to educate and mobilize TWU members in the fight for workers' rights.

TWU International President James C. Little was unable to attend the conference because of jury duty, so TWU International Vice President Harry Lombard gave the opening address in which he welcomed

members, retirees and officers to Washington, D.C., but did not mince words, "We are at a crossroads here, the lines are drawn — the TWU is all in," he said.

During the conference, TWU activists heard from labor leaders, politicians, policy experts and campaign leaders about legislative issues facing workers and the transit, rail, air and gaming industries. Conference attendees put the workshops and trainings into practice at meetings with lawmakers on Capitol Hill. They talked to Senators and Representatives about issues vital to the TWU and working families and urged them to protect workers' abilities to organize, ensure workplace safety, preserve programs like Social

Security and provide healthcare for all.

Gary Moffitt from Local 567 in Texas reported making some breakthroughs with Texas legislators on aviation issues and told the conference attendees to keep persevering and stay in contact with their politicians.

In her plenary speech, AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Arlene Holt-Baker stressed the importance of getting involved politically to push back against the coordinated corporate agenda that is trying to cut public service and hurt working families. "In order to win and keep our freedom to form strong unions, we need to win at the ballot box," said Holt-Baker. "It is at times like this that we appreciate the





the Next Generation Air Transportation System, investments in high-speed rail, and flexibility for transit operating assistance, and commended TWU leaders for their involvement working on committees with the DOT.

Former Congressman and House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman James Oberstar summed up the theme of the conference in his closing plenary address saying that the middle class needs to stand together for progress and through the labor movement has a strong voice. He said the U.S. government needs to upgrade the air traffic control system, enforce standards for foreign aircraft repair stations and extend OSHA protections to flight attendants.

Instead of shrinking government, America needs a government that looks out for the people said Oberstar. "In the name of budget cutting what they are doing in state legislature after state leg-



importance of electoral politics."

This is the fight of a generation, said U.S. Rep. Keith Ellison (D-MN). He railed against recent Federal budget proposals that attempt to balance the budget on the backs of workers as part of the right-wing plan to help the elite while leaving most Americans desperate and hungry. "You want to deal with the deficit, then put America back to work. So let's get to work putting America back to work," said Ellison.

Nick Unger, from AFL-CIO's Strategic Campaign Center, gave a powerful speech in which he compared labor's current situation to the battle of Gettysburg, the determining battle of the Civil War.



"We are at our Gettysburg opportunity now. You are the last line of defense, or the country goes to hell in a hand basket... what you do, will keep America a democracy," said Unger.

The attendees also learned about transportation issues from officials from the Obama Administration, including Deputy Secretary of Transportation (DOT) John Porcari, Federal Railroad Administration Deputy Administrator Karen Rae, Federal Aviation Administration Administrator Randy Babbitt and Federal Transit Administration Administrator Peter Rogoff. They shared the goals of the DOT which include the implementation of



islature is cutting workers' rights in the name of reducing our budget, but they created this budget mess," said Oberstar.

Lombardo challenged TWU members to spread the message in their communities and take action such as the people of Wisconsin did because workers cannot rely on politicians alone or anyone else to do what is right.



*This page, from left: L to R: Dennis Hall, Local 514, Portia Reddick White, TWU Director of Legislative and Political Affairs, and Congressman Emanuel Cleaver (D-MO); Congresswoman Yvette Clarke (D-NY) with TWU International Leaders. L to R: Jeffrey Brooks, Sr., Portia Reddick White, Harry Lombard, Clarke, John Conley and Joseph Gordon; Congressman Keith Ellison (D-MN) speaks at the conference about putting America back to work.*



# NATIONWIDE WE ARE ONE DAY OF ACTION

## OHIO



Top: TWU Local 2019 members at the Macedonia Car shop in Ohio take part in the day of action wearing TWU shirts and pins. Left: The TWU motor coach was in Columbus, Ohio on April 4 to provide logistical support.

## TEXAS



Above, left: Members of Locals 513, 565 and 567 sent a strong message of unity and determination, as they held a joint workers' rights are human rights rally on the field at Dallas Fort Worth airport and wore TWU buttons. Above, right: Local 555 in Dallas wears buttons, stickers and t-shirts in support of the We Are One day of action.

## NEW YORK



Left: Members of Local 101 marched with banners and signs across the Brooklyn Bridge with thousands of members of other unions and community allies to join a massive rally in front of New York's City Hall. Above: Local 2001 holds a TWU banner at a We Are One solidarity rally in Newburg, N.Y.

## FLORIDA



Top: Local 291 in Miami, Fla. was a core organizer of a rally attended by over 200 people on April 4. Right: Local 568 participated in the Miami rally.



From coast to coast on April 4 TWU members joined millions of Americans in the We Are One day of action that included over 1,000 coordinated actions to protect workers' rights and build a movement to defend the American middle-class.

In state capitols, big cities and small towns, TWU members stood with fellow union brothers and sisters, faith leaders, progressives, environmentalists, students and everyday people to oppose the anti-worker politicians who are looking

to pay back their CEO cronies by busting unions, slashing public services and privatizing.

For the first time in our generation, nearly a hundred TWU Locals in 70 cities participated in coordinated protests and solidarity activities. The mobilization was possible because of the enthusiasm and spirit of TWU activists and members around the country. Locals from each division and in towns and cities across the country led protests, attended vigils,

held workplace actions and wore Workers' Rights are Human Rights buttons and t-shirts.

The day of action commemorated the link between labor and civil rights and Dr. Martin Luther King's assassination 43 years ago on April 4 while he was supporting a strike by public sector sanitation workers in Memphis.

The April 4th day of action sent a message to the rich and was a sign of things to come in this growing movement.



## PENNSYLVANIA



Left: Members of Local 234 at a SEPTA facility in Philadelphia. Below: Members of Local 2013 held a worksite action.



## NEVADA

In Las Vegas, Nev. TWU members from Local 721, 556 and new members from Allegiant Air joined a rally planned as part of the nationwide actions.



## OKLAHOMA



Local 514 joined protests at the Okla. state capitol to oppose Republican-backed measures to repeal collective bargaining rights for some city employees, change police and firefighter union labor disputes, and take away due process rights of teachers.

## MICHIGAN



Local 2051 members join the We Are One rally in Detroit.

# Attack on Public Workers: Money or Political Payback?

by COPE  
and Political  
Field Director  
**Alex Garcia**

Is the current attack on public workers about the money or something else? It's a worthwhile question to ask as TWU and other unions fight to protect our members and their families from this onslaught.

On the simplest level, the confrontation was sparked by the need for cash-strapped local governments to balance their budgets. So yes, money was an issue.

But, why then has it escalated to a battle to protect bargaining rights and other union safeguards for workers? And why did Gov. Scott Walker of Wisconsin turn down a deal that gave him all the concessions he originally sought? Instead, he pushed through a bill depriving state workers of their rights.

When we look a little closer, it's obvious that the real issue is a desire to take power away from workers and their unions. Without organized labor as a countervailing force against the big corporations, the future for American workers, public or private, is dim.

That's why TWU activists joined other unionists and community allies at demonstrations on April 4th across the United States to declare that we will fight this effort to take away workers' rights to organize, bargain and speak with one voice. TWU also had a strong presence at the earlier rally and sit-in in Madison, Wis. to protest Gov. Walker's actions. (Although Republican majorities passed his anti-worker bill, it is currently held up in the Wisconsin courts.)

Most recently, tens of thousands of Ohioans, including a large contingent of TWU supporters, turned out April 9 to kick off the referendum drive against SB5, the anti-middle class bill signed by Ohio's Republican Gov. John Kasich. TWU supporters in Ohio are being led by International Rep. Fred Fink (Rail Division), International Rep.

Theotis James (Transit) and Assistant Air Transit Division Director Robert Gless.

Labor and its allies hope to kill SB5 for good, if we can get enough signatures to put a referendum on the ballot. TWU members are planning "train the trainers" sessions to help marshal the army of canvassers who are needed to help "Kill the Bill." SB 5 would restrict the bargaining rights of roughly 350,000 teachers, firefighters, police officers and other public employees. They would no longer be able to negotiate health care benefits or most working conditions. Public workers would also be barred from striking in Ohio.

Sadly, another anti-worker battle is taking shape in my home state of Florida. As TWU President James C. Little said in a guest editorial in the Miami Herald, "You need a scorecard to keep track of the dizzying number of anti-worker bills in the agendas of Gov. Rick Scott and statehouse



year. Another measure would severely limit workers participation in politics.

"We've heard a lot about restricting, and even eliminating, labor unions out of Tallahassee," said President Little. "But we haven't heard a word about any corresponding new regulations on corporations."

"In Rick Scott's Florida, working people — including members of my union who work for Miami-Dade Transit — will not be permitted to contribute freely to their own unions, or to candidates and causes of their choosing."

I couldn't agree more with the TWU President when he concludes: "TWU members are proud to be part of the Florida labor movement, fighting every day for middle-class jobs and decent public services. When politicians backed by big money try to take

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Without organized labor as a countervailing force against the big corporations, *the future for American workers, public or private, is dim.*

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Republicans. The goal is to weaken the voice of ordinary Florida families while strengthening the hand of Scott and his fellow millionaires. The anti-union agenda makes Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker's program pale by comparison."

As Little notes, various bills would: Eliminate dues check-off for union workers; shut workers out of politics; cancel tenure for teachers; cut workers' pensions; and force public-sector unions out of existence unless a union can show more than 50 percent membership in a workplace, each and every

away our rights, it's time to ask: Whose side are you on? And who becomes stronger when labor unions become weaker?"

To get back to our original question, yes, it is about the money. But it's not really state deficits or public worker pay. It's the ability of big corporations and the wealthy to get richer while average workers struggle even harder to stay afloat.

That's why we need you in this fight. Become active in your state conferences, which are spearheading TWU efforts in this battle, and, of course, donate to COPE.



# Campaign for a Fair Contract at American Airlines Goes Global

The fight for a fair contract at American Airlines is heating up with a renewed national and international campaign that is tapping into the power of the newly formed One World of Labour Council to build international solidarity.

TWU Locals representing workers at American Airlines are leading a coordinated campaign to put pressure on AMR Corp. and mobilize for a decent contract. Through the One World of Labour Council the TWU will be able to leverage international support and hold actions around the globe.

"The efforts to get a fair contract have intensified and united locals to work as 'One Union, with One Voice,'" said Local 565 President Bob Zimmerman. "Our members are angry and frustrated and we're also united in purpose as never before. We're determined to win justice for our members."

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*"Our members are angry and frustrated and we're also united in purpose as never before. We're determined to win justice for our members."*

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The council was formed in conjunction with the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF), a 4.6 million member union federation, to bring together all union workers at the airlines in the One-world Alliance, which includes American Airlines and other major carriers like Iberia, British Airways and Japan Airlines.

During a meeting from April 18-20 in Washington, DC at the TWU International headquarters, fourteen unions representing workers at eight airlines from eight different countries formed the council and

discussed strategies, shared experiences and coordinated actions.

The TWU helped spearhead the international solidarity efforts in order to help unions respond to a rapidly changing industry and build the power of workers at American Airlines and other carriers to bargain decent contracts and prevent outsourcing. The council will help unions forge new strategies, coordinate actions

and emphasized the importance behind the global labor alliance and promised American Airlines would see more protests, not only here, but abroad as well. "We made an investment to help this company, our passengers, and stockholders over eight years ago," replied President of Local 568 Sidney Jimenez from Miami, Florida. "Unfortunately we are still waiting for the promised return on our investment."




*Representatives from 14 unions representing workers in Europe and Latin America met in Washington, DC at the TWU headquarters to discuss strategies and build alliances.*

and build stronger relationships to defend workers and ensure decent jobs.

"TWU International President James C. Little recognized early on that it is in our best interest to form a One World labor coalition — a partnership amongst workers that would assist us in developing communications systems, sharing information, and examining common problems and goals," said John Conley, TWU International Administrative Vice President, speaking at a press event on April 20.

TWU Local 568 President Sidney Jimenez

said that as airlines create global partnerships that function as de-facto mergers, workers should share in any success and that these new relationships should not circumvent collective bargaining.

"We're going to use the power of the ITF to help us settle this dispute. When you have that many people under one umbrella, you've got power," said TWU ATD Director Garry Drummond. 



# TWU REPORT

## *on aircraft maintenance*

### Safety gaps in overseas aircraft repair facilities.

**T**he increasing use of overseas repair facilities for U.S. aircraft maintenance has led to significant safety and security gaps, according to a recent report by the TWU.

The study, *Who's Fixing My Plane: Aircraft Maintenance in America?*, shows that over the past decade most U.S. airlines have begun outsourcing a large portion of their maintenance and repair to third parties, often located in other countries like China, Mexico and Singapore. This has meant the loss of good jobs, as well as increased safety issues and a lack of oversight.

Based on a review of government audits and industry data, the study found that over 40 percent of aircraft repair and maintenance work at seven major carriers is now outsourced — a number that would be even higher if not for the large proportion of work still performed in-house at American Airlines by TWU members.

For example, in July 2009 Southwest Airlines began sending large numbers of its 737s to El Salvador's largely unregulated Aeroman facility. The 100 percent domestic carrier continues to shuttle aircraft to Central America every month for repair.

American Airlines and TWU on the

other hand have countered the industry trend towards increased outsourcing, and have developed a reputation for high-quality work that has allowed American to generate revenue by performing work for other carriers. American outsources just 12 percent of its maintenance work, down from 15 percent in 2001.


"There's no room for error in the airline industry," said TWU International President James C. Little. "Our members who repair aircraft for a living are very aware of the responsibility we have to protect every single passenger who gets on one of our airplanes. But we're not playing on a level field — not when work at outsourced facilities overseas can avoid the certification of mechanics, background checks, and alcohol and drug testing that are a regular feature of TWU workplaces."

Although the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has jurisdiction to inspect overseas facilities, it lacks the personnel to do the job adequately. In addition, these facilities are not subject to unannounced FAA inspections and uniform safety standards. Unlike U.S. based workers, workers at these facilities are not subject to background checks or drug and alcohol tests.

At least one member of Al Qaeda was found working at a major maintenance facility in Singapore in 2003.

"There is considerable evidence that many firms, indeed entire industries, seek to gain a competitive advantage by outsourcing abroad their productive activities, mainly to take advantage of lower standards of regulation or lower levels of enforcement," said Dr. Emanuel Thorne, who chairs the Economics Department at CUNY's Brooklyn College and has been studying U.S. companies shifting work overseas to escape federal oversight. "Outsourcing airline maintenance to avoid appropriate FAA regulation may be one such instance."

In addition to using overseas repair facilities, U.S. airlines also outsource to U.S.-based companies, which also lack proper oversight.

"Congress must act — and act wisely," said Little. "In the airline industry, we prefer to fix our problems on the ground. Congress needs to give FAA the tools to help us do the job. That means uniform standards and rigorous inspections for aircraft repair — no matter where the repair takes place." 



# *make them* **PAY**

This tax day while you were frantically rushing to finish your tax returns, many of the mega-corporations that got us into the current financial mess probably spent that time counting their money and having a laugh at the rest of us. GE and tons of other corporations will have a tax bill for 2010 of ZERO.

GE had \$14.2 billion in profits in 2010. Yet they will contribute NOTHING to the federal government, while every last dime is soaked from working people. Exxon Mobil, with earnings of more than \$45 billion, is the world's most profitable corporation. Yet in 2009, it was not liable for any taxes. They actually received a \$156 million tax rebate.

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*America is not broke.  
The right wing wants  
to convince us we're  
broke so that they can  
push through their  
radical agenda.*

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Meanwhile, the right wing is on the attack: slashing public services, eliminating workers' rights and destroying jobs. Their excuse? "America is broke" — and yet big corporations and the wealthy are raking it in, and continue to get tax break after tax break. Something doesn't add up.

America is not broke. The right wing wants to convince us we're broke so that they can push through their radical agenda. And well-connected corporations continue to use their political power to dodge their taxes. In 2009, after helping crash the American economy, Bank of America paid \$0 in taxes. Republicans want to give a \$50 billion tax bailout to big oil companies — and at the same time

take away food aid to hungry pregnant women and children. This is immoral and un-American.

With all the hysteria about the national deficit and state budget shortfalls, there is a simple solution- make the richest pay their fair share. Corporations and multi-millionaires are paying record low-levels of taxes, which starves public programs, weakens job creation and exacerbates wealth inequality.

As workers see their paychecks shrinking and struggle to cover their basic expenses, the wealthiest are making more and paying less. The 400 taxpayers with the highest income saw their average income increase 392 percent over the past 15 years yet their tax rate dropped 37 percent. Only in this upside down unjust system can a janitor pay a higher tax rate than a millionaire.

Enough is enough! On Tax Day, April 18, unions, progressive, environmentalists and middle class families called on corporations and millionaires to pay their fair share. At hundreds of events from coast to coast, people presented tax bills to corporate tax dodgers for the billions of dollars their legions of lobbyists helped them avoid.

It's time to demand that everyone pays their fair share to rebuild the American Dream. Everyone facing cuts or cutbacks, a pink slip or a shrinking paycheck — is invited to join in.

*In Columbus, Ohio TWU members from Local 208 tell big corporations to pay their share on Tax Day.*



## **TTD AGENDA FOR JOBS AND FAIRNESS AT WORK**



Addressing the crisis facing transit systems, ensuring fair union elections for rail and aviation workers, and creating jobs are some of the top legislative priorities of transportation unions according to a statement released by the Transportation Trades Department (TTD), AFL-CIO.

The TTD Executive Committee, which includes the TWU and International President James C. Little, recently released a policy statement on seven key issues impacting workers in the rail, transit and aviation industries.

The TTD called on the Congress to pass a much-needed FAA Reauthorization Bill, but will not support a version of the bill that includes repealing a recent rule change that makes union elections more fair and democratic. The statement urged Congress to quickly pass a robust surface transportation bill that is needed to help states fund transportation projects and help the weak economy while creating jobs.

Transit agencies across the country are facing budget shortfalls and need to be given flexibility in using federal funds in order to avoid service cuts and layoffs. The TTD statement also discusses the importance of expanding Amtrak's high-speed rail network.

*Above: TWU International President James C. Little at the TTD Executive Committee meeting in Washington, DC.*

# Rail Shipments of Damaged Hazmat Containers More Than Doubles

The number of damaged or leaking hazardous materials containers shipped by rail has more than doubled over the past four years, and rail unions are demanding to know why.

The shocking figures are highlighted in comments filed on March 24 by seven Rail Labor unions, the TWU, ATDA, BLET/IBT, BMWED/IBT, BRS, TCU and UTU, in response to a Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) Notice of Public Meeting.

The FRA routinely grants special permission for railroads to transport damaged hazardous materials containers on mainline tracks to repair facilities. However, the number of requests from railroads has steadily increased over the last 16 years — with the number of approvals more than doubling since 2007, thereby subjecting rail workers to an unacceptable risk of exposure.

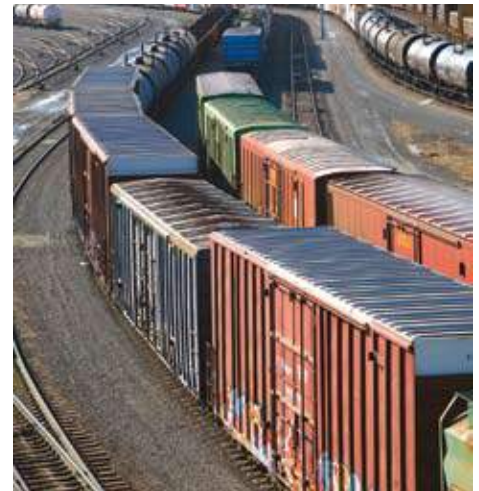
“FRA should fully investigate and address the underlying reasons for the increasing

number of movement requests,” the joint statement reads. “Railroads and shippers must do more to reduce the incidence of non-conformance.”

The unions contend that employees should be notified and provided protection when they will be moving and/or working in the vicinity of the damaged containers. Currently, there are no Federal Regulations in place requiring railroads to provide train crews with safety equipment to protect them from exposure to hazardous materials.

The unions were complimentary of the FRA noting that there have been no injuries or known exposures during the past 16 years. However, the risk of employee exposure will only increase if the current rate continues.

“Railroads and shippers have a business interest in timely review and approval of its movement requests,” the unions wrote. “As soon as the backlog impacts their bottom line, railroads and shippers will pres-



sure FRA to accelerate the approval process. Such acceleration will undoubtedly diminish the level of detail and due diligence now afforded each request, resulting in an increased probability of unintended consequences such as fire, explosion, or chemical exposure.”

## TWU RECOGNIZED FOR LEADERSHIP ON CLIMATE CHANGE

TWU was recognized for its leadership in addressing climate change by the Cornell Global Labor Institute for pioneering work to promote a science-based approach to greenhouse gas emissions reductions and the transition to a sustainable economy.

TWU was recognized particularly for its role at the 2010 Congress in advancing forward-thinking resolutions at the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) Congress and the UN Climate Talks (COP 16) in Cancun, Mexico. The Utility Workers Union (UWUA), Service Employees International Union (SEIU), Laborers International Union (LIUNA) and American Federation of Federal State County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) were also recognized for their leadership on climate policy.

TWU was commended for its impor-

tant role in pushing the ITF to adopt a strong resolution calling for binding science-based emission reductions targets. At the 2010 Congress, a statement written by TWU International President James C. Little urged aggressive action to mitigate climate change articulated the TWU's position and helped sway the debate.

While presenting the award, Sean Sweeney, Director of the Cornell Global Labor Institute, recognized Roger Toussaint, TWU International Vice President and Director of Strategic Planning, for his key role in the historic debate at the ITF Congress. TWU's efforts helped push the ITF to adopt a leading climate change resolution and support a forward-thinking position that will help the global labor movement advocate for the actions needed to avert the

disastrous impact of global warming.

At the UN Climate Talks, the TWU continued its leadership role joining with SEIU, LIUNA and the UWUA to issue a statement again calling for science-based reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and a fair, ambitious and binding climate agreement. At the close of those talks, the countries of the world agreed on some of the building blocks for a global deal to combat climate change.

The Cornell Global Labor Institute was established in 2005 to work with unions around the world to develop solutions to major social, economic and environmental challenges. They work to educate and assist union leaders and build connections between labor and community organizations.





Duane Marbury,  
Financial Secretary-  
Treasurer Local 208,  
gives a presentation  
on sustainability at  
the conference.



# Transit Leaders Make Connections

TWU leaders representing transit division locals from around the country met with fellow local and national union activists, transportation experts and transit system administrators to discuss the major challenges facing the transportation industry during a period of decreased funding and service cuts, an aging workforce and changing technology.

The Transportation Learning Center's Making Connections conference in Silver Spring, Md. on March 17, 2011 was an opportunity for participants to share ideas and discuss strategies for improving transit service and creating good jobs. TWU members from Philadelphia, New York and Columbus and International staff participated in workshops, gave presentations and led conversations on how to move the industry forward towards a more sustainable future.

A top priority was addressing the transit funding crisis that will result in service cuts, job losses and reductions in training. According to many of the presenters, there are creative strategies unions and transit agencies can employ to secure funding and develop innovative training programs that create jobs and provide career mobility. As

Bill Millar, President of the American Public Transportation Association, told the audience, change often occurs during times of stress and difficulty.

Participants reiterated that public transportation is key to America's future and economic recovery, but politicians have to understand the importance of transit and pass supportive legislation. J.W. Johnson, TWU Managing Director Legislative Government Affairs, discussed the pressing need to pass a long-term reauthorization of the federal ground transportation bill to provide much needed funding.

"In transit people move the product. You can have all the infrastructure you want but its an industry about people- the workers and the communities we serve," said Beverly Scott, General Manager/CEO of Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority. "We provide value every day — we get people to school, hospital and work. Politicians need to know how important our work is."

TWU members discussed green initiatives that their local unions have launched focused on training and increasing efficiency. Angel Gjboyeaux, Administrative Vice Pres-

ident TWU Local 100, presented on Local 100's work in New York City with the MTA to secure a \$5 million dollar grant for green skills training to teach hundreds of workers skills ranging from fiber-optics to photovoltaic installation. Local 208 in Columbus, Ohio is taking steps to make Central Ohio Transit Authority facilities more sustainable and Local 234 working with Keystone Partnership to connect people with jobs and skills training.

"We have a moral obligation to be green and it is something we need to do for our children and the future. Plus, going green is always cheaper and can create jobs for the future," said Duane Marbury, Financial Secretary-Treasurer Local 208, during a workshop on sustainability in public transportation.

During the closing session John Johnson, President TWU Local 234, remarked, "We all need to do this and be the visionaries needed to make positive things happen."



## WORKING WOMEN'S COMMITTEE

The TWU ATD Working Women's Committee held its meeting on March 7 and 8 in Hurst, Texas and Transit Division Women's Committee held their meeting on March 18 and 19 in Augusta, Ga. The meeting brought together members from many different TWU Locals to discuss issues facing women in the workplace and in the labor movement.

Members from TWU Locals from across the country heard presentations

from experts and participated in workshops on workplace health and safety, collective bargaining, political action and public speaking.

At the ATD meeting, participants honored International Women's Day on March 8. The participants also had a discussion on the importance of women leadership in unions and developed strategies for promoting women to positions of power.

Left, top: ATD meeting in Hurst, Texas. Left, bottom: Transit Division meeting in Augusta, Ga.

## Settlement for Workers **ILLEGALLY PUNISHED**

Justice was delivered in a settlement for two Aerotek workers who were fired for their union activity with the TWU and trying to organize their co-workers at the Hyundai Rotem train car assembly plant in Philadelphia.

The two workers, Don Kleinback and Joe Flynn, agreed to a settlement with Aerotek that provides them with 125 percent of their back pay and a neutral reference. The company also agreed to allow monthly union meetings in the lunchroom for all interested employees and rescind its confidentiality provision that prohibited workers from discussing wages, which will apply to all of its 300,000 employees nationwide. The company is sending a notice to employees about their legal rights and stating that the company will not punish them for union involvement or speaking out about unsafe working conditions.

Both men were strong union supporters and active in organizing. Kleinback was one of only two welders at the plant and had been sent to Korea for certification, but was still fired by the company for being a vocal leader. Flynn is an electrician and helped recruit his co-workers to sign union cards.



## **LOCAL 212** Officers Swearing In

Officers of TWU Local 212 in Columbus, Ohio are sworn in on April 23, 2011. L to R: Carl Martin (TWU International Transit Director), Natasha Packer (Secretary Treasurer/Recording Secretary), Bill Dickerson (President), Darrell Tucker (Vice President), Greg Daniels and Artina Turner (steward). Not pictured: Tiffany McCrary

Neither man wanted to work in a non-union shop with out representation and protection and opted for the settlement rather than taking back their jobs.

Aerotek led a nasty anti-union campaign that used spying, one on one meetings and phone banking in an attempt to intimidate workers. However, the TWU filed charges with the National Labor Relations Board over Aerotek's use of illegal tactics and eventually prevailed

by getting a positive settlement for the workers who had lost their jobs.

Another work group, TTA, at the Hyundai Rotem plant that provides final assembly on the new Silverliner V cars for SEPTA trains voted to join TWU last fall and began contract negotiations in November.

This is a major victory for workers at Aerotek in their efforts to get a voice on the job.

## **LOCAL 504** Swearing In

New officers sworn in at Local 504 in Jamaica, NY.

L to R: Richard Bohem (504 Exec. VP and International Rep), Eric Pfeiffer (Avport Section Officer), Anthony Borgiorno (CAS Section Officer), Patrick Kennedy (Exec. Board), John Kerrigan Jr (Exec. Board), Edward Murphy (Financial-Secretary Treasurer), John Berry (Executive Board), Dane Stricoff (President), Gary



Drummond (International ATD Director), Edwin Ticas-Garcia (Triangle Section Officer) and Julian Lewis (Exec. Board)

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## OUR TERMINAL, Our Jobs

Bustling midtown Manhattan was met with chants of “Stop Corporate Greed” and a giant inflatable rat as hundreds of TWU members rallied outside of Qatar Airways U.S. headquarters on April 12 to say, it's our terminal, it's our work, in protest to Qatar not using TWU Local 501 members when it begins operations at JFK International Airport.

Qatar is moving operations to JFK Terminal 8 that is operated by American Airlines, but unlike other foreign carriers, is not using American ground service workers who are members of Local 501. Instead the company is contracting out the work to a third party. This move, with American's approval, is yet another showing of corporate greed and an attack on the wages, working conditions and job security of Local 501 members.

“Qatar Airways is coming into an American Airlines terminal at JFK, but they are not utilizing our members who have a 66-year history of top quality service for airline passengers,” said Dave Virella, President of Local 501. “If Qatar doesn't want to make use of the trained and experienced workforce at the American Airlines terminal, they should take their business elsewhere.”

TWU Locals from around the New York area came to show solidarity and support for Local 501 members, including other air locals along with transit and rail locals. Meanwhile, solidarity

rallies were held in Houston, Texas and Chicago organized by fellow TWU Locals. Hundreds of TWU members delivered the message to stop corporate greed and respect the rights of workers.

“We have so much support out here. I am really proud of this rally and proud of this union,” said Robin Faulkner, TWU Local 501.

The decision at JFK to contract the work out is a new precedent as other foreign carriers who have partnered with American Airlines at other airports

are using American's workers. Only two weeks ago, the Japanese airline, JAL, relocated its gates at O'Hare Airport in Chicago to American's gates and the work remained with TWU members.

“As a 35 year veteran of American Airlines I've never seen this done before and I am appalled by it,” said Lenny Depalma, TWU Local 501.



*Below: April 12 protest outside Trump Tower in Manhattan where Qatar Airways has its North American headquarters.*



## TA REACHED FOR LOCAL 542 DISPATCHERS at Alaska Airlines

TWU Local 542 and Alaska Airlines jointly announced a tentative agreement on March 31 for a new four-year contract for the carrier's 36 dispatchers. The proposed contract includes wage increases and provisions to improve quality of life issues, among other changes.

Local 542 members will now review the proposed contract and conduct a ratification vote, with results expected in late April.

“Transport Workers Union Local 542 is pleased to have reached a tentative agreement with Alaska Airlines on a

new collective bargaining agreement that provides increased compensation for our members, who work tirelessly to ensure that each flight operates safely, compliantly and efficiently,” said Joe Demory, TWU Local 542 section chairman and an Alaska Airlines dispatcher.



# Struggle for Workplace Safety and Voice on the Job Continues 100 Years Later

One hundred years ago on March 25, 1911 a fire erupted on the top floors of a shirtwaist factory in a Manhattan that in just 30 minutes would take the lives of 146 workers, mostly young women, in the historic and tragic Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire. The horrendous event sparked reform in workplace health and safety as well as a drive to organize garment workers, but 100 years later workers are still struggling for safe workplaces and a voice on the job.

The 100-year commemoration is a reminder that workers often risk their lives when they go to work and that large corporations continue to evade their responsibilities and cut costs at the detriment of health and safety. Last year's Deepwater Horizon disaster in the Gulf of Mexico that claimed 11 lives and the Upper Big Branch coal mine explosion that killed 29 miners are painful reminders of the human costs of corporate irresponsibility and what happens when workers' don't have a collective voice to advocate for safer working conditions.


The Triangle Fire was one of the most horrendous and deadly industrial accidents of the 20th century and is a symbol of deplorable sweatshop working conditions. The young immigrant women, some only 15 years old, toiled in the hot and noisy factories seven days a week from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. for \$6 a week in unsanitary conditions and under exploitative subcontracting arrangements with few breaks. The workers were non-unionized and the bosses wielded dictatorial control over the workplace. The exhausting dangerous work left them trapped in poverty.

On that March day, 500 workers came to work at the Triangle Factory in the Asch Building on the northern corner of Washington Square East in Manhattan, but 146 of them would not return home that evening. A blaze began on the 8th floor and quickly spread. Tragically, the owners kept the one exit door locked and the fire escapes were flimsy and didn't reach the street. Faced with red-hot flames, many women jumped out of the windows to the horror of passerby's on the street below.

Unsafe working conditions and the owners' disregard for the safety of their employees exacerbated the death toll of the fire. Locked doors, no evacuation procedures, inadequate fire exits and a lack of water to put out the flames, turned the fire into a deadly industrial homicide.

The images and stories of women dying in the burning factory horrified and galvanized the city and the country. Garment workers in unprecedented numbers organized unions, while politicians were forced to create health and safety laws, improve fire codes and enhance workers compensation. The most deplorable sweatshop conditions were eradicated and workers in many industries won improved working conditions.

However, the mobilization after the fire did not come out of nowhere, but was the result of years of union organizing. A year and a half before the fire, 20,000 female garment workers went out on a mass strike in New York City demanding better pay, shorter hours and recognition of their unions. The large companies, like the Triangle factory owners, resisted and were able to get workers to return to work with some improvements but rejected closed shops and collective bargaining. Thus, the women returned to work in unsafe factories without a voice on the job and the power to stand up to management.

The anniversary of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire is an unpleasant reminder of the costs of unchecked corporate greed and the importance of empowered unionized workers. Today workers face a renewed attack on their rights as politicians try to take away collective bargaining and defund programs and agencies that ensure and enforce workplace safety. Companies continue to put profits over people and use a variety of scare tactics to prevent organizing. Yet the events surrounding the Triangle fire are also a reminder that mass mobilization can shift the balance of power and bring about change. 



# valuing work, BUT NOT WORKERS

by International  
Secretary-Treasurer  
Joseph C. Gordon

As I look at the latest economic news and the political posturing in Washington, I'm struck once again that while we talk a lot about the value of work, our country doesn't seem to value workers much anymore.

Not surprisingly, a new study by the Economic Policy Institute (EPI) finds that the destruction of wealth by the "Great Recession" hit the bottom 80 percent of U.S. households harder than the top 20 percent. So much for equal suffering. While the overall wealth pie was shrinking during the recession, it was simultaneously becoming more unequal. In 2009, the wealthiest 20 percent of households controlled 87.2 percent of all wealth and the top 1 percent controlled 35.6 percent of all wealth, each percentage has increased since 2007.

Even good news is not so good for workers. With unemployment inching downward, the ratio of unemployed workers to job openings was 4.4-to-1 in February, a substantial improvement from the revised January ratio of 5.1-to-1. Such a job seeker's ratio means that for 3 out of 4 unemployed workers, there simply are no jobs.

I guess the unemployed folks who got one of the 190,000 new jobs created in March can consider themselves lucky. But, many of the new jobs are unlikely to pay enough to cover the cost of basic needs such as housing, food, utilities, health care and transportation.

A study commissioned by the non-profit group Wider Opportunities for Women went even farther. It tries to assess what people really need for economic stability, rather than just day-to-day survival. It takes into account the need for an emergency fund, saving for a down payment on a

home and putting aside some money for the kids' college educations. However, few jobs today provide this stability unlike the good middle class jobs that were still common in my youth.

Of course by today's standards, the folks doing this study are wild-eyed optimists, if not downright subversive. Corporate types will accuse them of ignoring the need for global competitiveness, big returns for stockholders and a docile, non-union, labor force.

The decline in workers' income certainly doesn't concern conservative Republicans in Congress, who say deficit reduction is the big issue. While the U.S. deficit needs to be dealt with, how we go about it will say a lot about what kind of country

*While we talk a lot about the value of work, our country doesn't seem to value workers much anymore.*

we are. That's why I applaud President Obama's speech in April stating that we need to maintain crucial social programs such as Medicare and continue to invest in economic opportunity and education for current and future workers.

An Economic Policy Institute (EPI) study measured the economic impact of the proposed Republican budget for 2012 put forth by House Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan. EPI says the cuts in non-security discretionary (NSD) spending would result in stunning job losses — 2.2 million jobs over



the next two years. Furthermore, the NSD portion of the budget pays for programs that invest in a more capable workforce and a more dynamic economy. "Cutting this funding during a stalled recovery is not just counterproductive, it is economically irresponsible," EPI concluded.

Ryan's plan to replace Medicare with a voucher system is even more dangerous. The non-partisan Congressional Budget Office estimates that by 2030 the vouchers would cover only about one-third of the cost of a private insurance plan equivalent to current Medicare.

So there you have it: Not much for workers in the here and now and not much chance of a secure retirement in the future. I haven't even touched on the attack on our public workers, which is covered elsewhere in this issue. I don't mean to scare you, but I do encourage you to join us in the fight to make America a better place for working men and women.

# TRANSPORT WORKERS UNION OF AMERICA

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