

New York transit workers denounce sellout

Our reporting team
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Transit workers in New York City spoke to the *World Socialist Web Site* after Transport Workers Union (TWU) Local 100 officials announced a deal for a new four-year agreement covering 38,000 bus and subway workers employed by the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA). The agreement includes an insulting annual wage increase of 2.14 percent, which will do nothing to stop the erosion of living standards for workers who facing the crushing costs of housing and other living necessities.

Marcos said, “I think the contract is garbage. [TWU President John] Samuelson said two percent was not enough to live on. Two percent would not keep us ahead of inflation, he said. But they offer 2.5 percent for 13 months and he takes it. The big question is: what did we give back for this? Whatever the transit authority gave us didn’t cost them a thing.

“We should see the whole contract before we vote on it. If you sign something you don’t see and read, there is always something in there that will hurt you.”

His friend, Santos, began discussing the health care situation facing transit workers. “I’ve been here for 25 years and we always had two health care options, now we only have one, and it is not an option. The transit authority picks the insurance company. This month they are switching to Aetna, and we will have to wait and see how much worse it is.”

John, a younger worker, expressed his dissatisfaction with the multi-tier pension system. “I thought they were going to make some changes with the Tier 6 pension category. They took one percent from the older workers for their pension contribution. They take three percent from my pay now to pay for my pension. I am going to be forced to pay six percent when I get to the top rung of my wage level. I will also have to pay into my health care in Tier 6, and I will not be able to apply all the overtime I work in my last years toward my pension amount.”

David is a cleaner who has 31 years of service. He said, “They wouldn’t let me into the mass membership meeting last Saturday because I came from work and brought my lunch and drinks with me. The union chooses the venue with the guards at Madison Square Garden. Many people couldn’t get in, and didn’t like what happened. There was no strike vote at the meeting. All we know is what we read in the newspapers.

“The contract is Samuelson’s deal. He sold us out. We got no money in this contract and there was no money in the last one as well. But the union always wants a raise in our dues.

“And he got paid. He knows a lot of people are going to retire in the next two years. This contract has nothing in it for them.

“[Governor Andrew] Cuomo has a say in holding back our money as well. These politicians all have a hand in it. We go up to Albany once a year and we get nothing. I think the working class definitely should have its own party.”



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