



## USWA Local 8751 - District 4

**Boston School Bus Drivers Union**

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[www.BostonSchoolBusUnion.org](http://www.BostonSchoolBusUnion.org)

**CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL! Victory with CONTRACT 2004 - Many GAINS WON!  
FIRST STUDENT / MENINO / SCHOOL DEPARTMENT CONCESSIONS TOTALLY DEFEATED  
RANK & FILE UNITY IN ACTION +  
SOLIDARITY WITH THE COMMUNITY & LABOR MOVEMENT = OUR SUCCESS!**

**You have done what no other group of workers in the city of Boston, private or public, has done this year – make significant economic and rights gains, without giving up one concession to the bosses.** Your

wages will increase by a percentage on par with or better than all other Unions: 14.5% through June 2008. First ever 100% company paid Family Dental & Vision insurance will be available within 30 days. The company has agreed to make good on its Sickness & Accident insurance responsibility; all laid off drivers have been restored; the company has finally been forced to hire qualified monitors to fill open routes; and significant gains have been made for your rights and your Union's rights on the job. **The Union is meeting**

**with the company this morning to demand the company make good its promise to issue retro checks immediately. Details of these gains, and the schedule for new benefits and retro checks, will come soon in the Union's next bulletin.**

**To you, the militant, determined rank & file - who walked the picket lines, marched and rallied at the School Department, marched on First Student's corporate offices, attended all the community and labor meetings, worked in solidarity with the Boston United for Fair Contracts Coalition's (32 city unions) many actions, marched on the DNC, and brought the struggle into every bus yard - the entire membership of Local 8751 owes you a debt of gratitude. The credit for the victories we have won goes to you. You are the heart of this union.**

We must learn the lessons of the unfortunate events that occurred at the Oct 28<sup>th</sup> Meeting. We must all denounce the organized, calculated campaign of a small, disruptive, loud and violent element that denied our members the right to a fair, free democratic discussion and vote as guaranteed by the USWA constitution and law.

Let's review what happened. 357 members signed in. We want to take this opportunity to thank Guard Omar Thomas, Grievance Committee Chair Selwyn Bynoe, V.P. Frantz Mendes and Guide Sam Parris for the splendid job they did in checking in the attendance and assuring that all received the full packet of literature for the meeting. Leading up to the meeting there was exemplary preparation. The leadership was determined to assure a fully informed membership, full discussion and debate, so that when the vote was finally taken, every member would get their deserved rank & file democracy. For over 2 full weeks this process proceeded smoothly. Multiple union bulletins were issued summarizing and analyzing the company's many final offers and explaining the Union's counter proposals. All members had full access to this information and more on the Union's new, impressive Web site at [www.bostonschoolbusunion.org](http://www.bostonschoolbusunion.org).

The Contract Bulletin was even sent home to all members on leaves of absence. The Union demanded and received copies of the Company's "final" offer for every single member well in advance of the meeting. Multiple, detailed yard meetings were conducted.

As members entered the hall, the high level of organization and preparation was apparent. Set-up, which started at 4:30 PM, included banners, placards, front and floor microphones, full financial reports since Jan. 2004, and an exhaustive literature display to assure the rights of the members. Literature included a detailed summary of both the company's offer and the Union's Counter Offer, copies of the wonderful City Council Resolutions passed on our behalf and initiated by our friends Chuck Turner, Felix Arroyo and Charles Yancey, a document exposing First Student's finances, prior bulletins, resolutions and more.

At 6:00 PM the meeting was called to order to conduct the Union's regular monthly business. From that time until nearly 8:00 PM there was exemplary conduct of those in attendance. No



yelling, no fights, no problems. Business was conducted in the proper atmosphere of solidarity and respect.

At precisely the moment when the president called for discussion on the company's "final" offer, a loud, raucous, violent and organized disruption began by a small element within the meeting. Not one speaker from either side of the question was free to complete their remarks without shouting down, kicking and pounding of walls, attempts to drown out their voice with chants of "Vote, Vote". All good Union members in attendance will agree that this was a most crude and shameful display by those who hate rank & file democracy. This kind of conduct cannot and will not be tolerated. The Union Leadership was determined to follow the will of the members as reflected in your vote. We were also determined to assure that it was a fair and free vote following a discussion when all members would have their say. The leadership and members on both sides of the question made repeated efforts to bring the meeting back to order. Staff representative Joe Carlson and Sub-District Director Al Polk of the USWA International were also unsuccessful in restoring order.

There was no need for this disruption. It brings a cloud over an historic victory of which we should be proud. The question was simple. Were the majority of the members satisfied with the progress made by the leadership or did the members wish to fight on for more? The leadership reported both in bulletins, at yard meetings and at the Oct 28<sup>th</sup> meeting that we thought it was worth one more try for more, but that the decision was in your hands, and we, as your representatives, would follow the will of the majority. An honest, respectful and full exchange of views followed by an orderly vote of the members in attendance should have been the order of the night. There was no need for anger, disrespect, beefing, vandalism and acrimony. Regrettably, due to the conduct of this divisive, disruptive element, this is what took place.

To those who violated another member's rights and came to the meeting with that intent in mind- Shame on you! To those who provoked fights and shouted down your Union sisters and brothers – Shame on you! To those who kicked in the rear wall, causing significant damage to the hall of our brother/sister Boston Teachers Union – Shame on you! We call on you to come forward and take financial and personal responsibility for this most reprehensible, illegal and anti- Union act. Good members' dues money should not be spent to pay for your deplorable deed. To those who are distorting the events of Oct 28<sup>th</sup> and sowing more division to further their own agendas, to attack the leadership – Shame on you! And finally, to the International, who on Friday denied the members an actual ratification vote in the yards – Shame on you. The result clearly would have been the same, but members' democratic rights would have been protected.

## **MOVE FORWARD IN UNITY**

It was clear at the time of the disruption, even in the midst of the chaos, that the members in attendance were significantly divided on the question of whether to fight on for more. Observing this reality made it clear to the leadership that the fight was over. There was no way that a membership divided could return to the table for more. It was also clear that the majority in attendance were satisfied and prepared to vote to accept the company's final offer. We absolutely respect your will, and we feel sure that the majority was sending a vote of confidence in the Union's successes in the contract struggle. It is for this reason that we in the leadership took action to carry out that will. We are meeting with the company to implement all the gains of the package, draft the contract book for printing, press for speedy retro pay, and in general tie together all remaining loose ends.

To those in attendance that were prepared to vote to return to the table and fight for more economic justice and respect for all of our members, we thank and applaud you. We know how hard you have fought, picketed, rallied and marched. Know that we advocated to the International in the strongest terms that your rights be respected, with the intent to win your right to vote, but we were unfortunately overruled. What was the final tally of the vote to ratify? No one will ever know.

## **UNITY! UNITY! UNITY!**

**No matter what side of the hall you stood on the night of Oct. 28<sup>th</sup>, stand together now!** Now is the time to close ranks, unite to defend our gains of Contract 2004, and strengthen this Union local. We hope that you will continue to come to your membership meetings in large numbers. Attend the Union School Sessions at the Stewards' General Council Meetings the first Monday of every Month (except Nov., when the meeting is Nov 8<sup>th</sup> due to contract finalization issues). Consider becoming a steward and/or participating in the many Union committees. Join us in advocating a swift return of the bus monitors to Local 8751.

**CELEBRATE CONTRACT VICTORY 2004 and  
WELCOME IN THE HOLIDAY SEASON WITH YOUR SISTERS & BROTHERS OF LOCAL 8751!  
Saturday, December 11<sup>th</sup> – 9:00 PM until 2:00 AM  
Carver Lodge, Talbot Ave., Dorchester**

Join us in giving commendations to activists of Local 8751 for getting the job done.

***Thanks for the Solidarity, to our many friends in the Community and Organized Labor – Mass AFL CIO, Greater Boston Labor Council, City Councilors Felix Arroyo, Charles Yancy and our great and long-time brother Chuck Turner.***

**Unity won this battle. Unity will carry us forward!**