



USW Local 8751 - District 4

Boston School Bus Drivers' Union

25 Colgate Rd. • Roslindale, MA 02131
Telephone (617) 524-7073 Fax (617) 524-1691
www.BostonSchoolBusUnion.org

March 14, 2011

Insurance Companies, Employers, Menino, Patrick, & Democratic and Republican Politicians
In Nationwide Alliance to Make Workers Pay for the Bosses' Crisis



USW Local 8751 Says, "No Concessions!"

"Hands Off Our Health and Other Hard-Earned Benefits!"

**"We Demand – and Our Families Need and Deserve:
Better Health, Dental & Retirement Benefits, Now!"**

Defend Public Education!

**Stop the BPS School Closings, Budget Cuts and Charter Privatization!
All Out March 23rd to the School Committee Budget Vote!**

Politicians, corporate CEO's, and their media mouthpieces in Boston have been fond of saying in recent days that this is no Wisconsin, where hundreds of thousands of teachers, firefighters, bus drivers, office workers, students and their community allies have been occupying the capital and its streets for weeks, preparing for a general strike, battling their Tea Party and billionaire backed governor. Wisconsin's governor has blatantly and illegally launched his attack to completely break and outlaw that state's public and private sector unions, unilaterally slash workers' pay and benefits, lay off thousands, and privatize and cut healthcare, education, food programs, and other vital social services through the bone. **Local 8751's February 17th Membership Meeting unanimously resolved to wholeheartedly and concretely support our sisters and brothers in Wisconsin, Ohio, Indiana, Florida and throughout the country and its colony, Puerto Rico, who are waging battles on many fronts for the very survival of organized labor and government services for working and poor people.**

Indeed, Massachusetts is different. Here, government officials, business fat cats, and daily screaming headlines are trying to convince us to agree to cut our own throats and bail them out of their economic crisis with more of our dwindling but hard-earned wages. Here they smile, speak of "collective pain" and "inevitable concessions", and pat union reps on the back with a hand wielding a butcher's knife for the rank and file.

Incredibly, during the same week that Governor Patrick and Mayor Menino's good friends at Blue Cross Blue Shield and Harvard Pilgrim were exposed by the Attorney General's office giving themselves and their boards multi-million dollar golden parachutes and lavish stipends, these political misleaders were testifying at the statehouse – along with the Chamber of Commerce and assorted insurance industry millionaires – in support of the governor's bills to balance the budget by forcing workers to pay more to insurance companies! Their plan is to kick retirees off their health insurance, raise the retirement age and turn pension plans into 401k's, eliminate union's rights to collective bargaining for health and other benefits, and to force millions of workers into a state run private insurance scam known as the GIC (Group Insurance Commission), which sells substandard Blue Cross, Harvard Pilgrim, and other insurance products with high deductibles, large co-pays for visits and prescriptions, and strictly limit patients to the cheapest healthcare facilities. **In essence, the GIC funnels millions more dollars from workers paychecks directly to the same wildly profitable insurance companies and their directors who have caused the crisis of health costs in the first place.**

The media war in Massachusetts is different, too. In Wisconsin, newspaper headlines call for the National Guard and police to attack the workers peacefully demonstrating in Madison. In Boston, Globe and Herald editorials simply attack with ridicule, and blame the workers who provide every service. The Herald's owners argue that union's are old fashioned and champion Wisconsin's Tea Party governor. They call for greater speed-ups and efficiency on the job, and place blame for capitalism's crisis of bank bailouts, record

Unity! Unidada!



Unité! Unidade!

foreclosures, mass layoffs, war budget deficits, ecological destruction and global corporate exploitation on “impossibly expensive” union workers. (“Old union model no longer working” Editorial 3/9/2011.) The Globe’s more liberal, and better paid, New York Times managers summarily dismiss the Mass. AFL-CIO’s attempt to sway the Democratic majority and insurance financiers by offering compromises and concessions for the workers. (“Unions’ plan on health costs offers way too little, too late” Editorial 3/9/2011.)

To top it all off, President Obama came to TechBoston Academy in Dorchester - a “pilot” school where union rights have been eliminated by a City Hall campaign of teacher/cafeteria worker/custodian/bus driver/monitor/office worker/nurse/librarian vilification. With Melinda Gates, wife of the richest man in the world, Microsoft’s Bill Gates, by his side, the president announced that, “First, we also have to stop making excuses for bad teachers.” He championed his two year wage freeze for federal workers (all, except the military), called for \$400 billion in budget cuts to state programs and the elimination of 200 federal programs, including education resources and grants for college students, lauded the “competition” of private, for profit, anti-union charter schools against “failing” public schools, and urged corporations and the very wealthy to give more charity to schools, and promote a Race to the Top (which by definition only one can win.)

Clearly, the only option for workers and unions in Massachusetts is to fight like a Wisconsin worker, like an Egyptian worker, like a Greek worker. Because here in Massachusetts, there really is no difference from the relentless attacks that ever wealthier Wall Street executives and their political mouthpieces are waging around the globe. **In Boston, they plan to close or merge 21 schools, turn their public buildings and over \$110 million per year of public funds to 10 new charter schools (plus 14 already operating) run by private anti-union charter businesses,** all the while blaming the unions, handing out pink slips, driving wages and benefits for all lower and lower, and taking a budget axe to services for children, women, the poor, elderly, immigrants, the sick and the disabled.

Now more than ever - Continue Local 8751’s Fight Back Tradition

Clearly, the only option is to fight like a Boston School Bus Driver! Local 8751 has fought back repeated union-busting and concession attacks with 11 strikes against nearly as many bus companies since our proud founding in 1977. With countless other job actions, skirmishes and street campaigns we have won and maintain the level of wages and benefits that we enjoy today, a labor agreement that is better in economics, working conditions and rights than any other school bus contract in the nation. But in this climate of anti-worker frenzy emanating from corporate board rooms, state house hearing rooms, city hall press conferences, and Washington, D.C. fundraisers, we can not rest on our reputation, rely on a few to talk our way out, or think that we are somehow immune from the bombs that are dropping all around us. **We must prepare now to fight harder, with more unity and solidarity, than we have ever fought before.**

On Jan. 26, 2011, the Mayor’s Office of Labor Relations wrote to Local 8751, proposing “discussions” about Local 8751 members moving to the state’s high-deductible, high co-payment GIC private health insurance plans, and threatening that the governor and mayor’s legislation may “require” the forced concession. The Union didn’t answer the letter, not because the Mayor needs a lesson about how we work in the private sector for the largest private school bus and interstate passenger company in the U.S., Canada, and Europe, **First Student** (aka First Group). **Menino and his labor relations office know very well that their interference in private collective bargaining on behalf of a transnational corporation - that trades on Englands FTSE exchange of top 100 profitable corporations and reports \$735.581 million (£453.9 million British pounds) in 2010 operating profits - is illegal.** Menino runs interference for corporate interests every day. Local 8751 didn’t answer because the mayor’s threat does not deserve the respect of answer. **Local 8751 will not bargain away our members’ hard fought benefits and rights with anybody. The answer is, “Hell No!”**

If **Menino’s** office wants to help prepare for fair and good faith negotiations between its super-profitable vendor and Local 8751, it **should order First Student to open its books and its coffers and devise a just and progressive proposal to our members,** from whose labor every penny of its operating profit is derived. This proposal needs to include absolutely no concessions. The company’s proposal needs to offer **more affordable premiums for our existing health insurance plans,** so that the company takes on more of its responsibility. (Currently, drivers already pay a whopping 20% of the premium, \$122.81/week for a BCBS family plan, and \$147.72/week for Harvard Pilgrim.) The company needs to prepare a proposal that includes a **real dental plan** to replace the unusable and shamefully unaffordable Cigna ripoff, which leaves our members unable to fix their teeth. And the company needs to offer a **real retirement plan** that makes it possible for our members to afford to retire with dignity; currently drivers who have served the children of Boston for nearly 40 years are forced to work until we die.

Who would have thought just two months ago that the 40 year brutal dictatorship in Egypt could be overthrown in a matter of weeks? From Africa and the Middle East to the U.S. Middle West, People Power in the streets is exposing and taking on the local elites and profiteers against all odds. Local 8751 and all of our members are preparing to **Fight Like Egyptians!** for the Dignity, Respect, Rights, Job Security and Economic Justice that we deserve, and that we have earned.

Membership Meeting Thursday, March 24th 6:30 PM

Boston Teachers Union

(enter from Day Blvd., behind Boston Expo Center)

Partial Agenda:

Regular Business

Nominations for

Contract Negotiations Committee

Selection of Tellers

to run April 14th election

Scheduling of Demands Meeting

The citywide membership of Local 8751 will elect 2 representatives from each yard to be on the Contract Negotiations Committee, to augment the top 5 Executive Board members and Chief Stewards, and to ensure citywide representation and direct communications from the Committee to every yard.



Social Justice Academy students marched from Hyde Park High to the School Committee budget hearing at English High on March 2nd to demand that the Mayor's appointed committee rescind its December decision to close their and 20 other schools. With the call to "Resurrect Public Education", students chanted, "They Say Get Back! We Say Fight Back!", and took over the stage inside the English auditorium. The School Bus Drivers and our sound truck were proud to join the Latino/a lead students in their continuing struggle.

photo: Steve Kirschbaum

Union Wrests \$115,000 more from First Student in Grievance Settlement offers

Chief Stewards of Local 8751 have filed and processed an average 300+ grievances per year since 2003, fighting and making legal claim to unpaid wages & benefits stolen by the company, and protesting unjust discipline against our members, including a near perfect winning record in arbitrations. Like a charged bank robber attempting to plea bargain the day before trial, Union prosecutors have forced First Student to plead/offer hundreds of settlements to grievances filed in the last two years, just prior to new contract negotiations. (The Union forced similar offers from the company at the brink of contract talks in 2005 and 2008, and has demanded settlement of the few remaining grievances from that period, also.)

In democratic fashion, grievant members make all decisions to accept or reject company offers. Please contact the Union office with any questions about your grievance. In the spirit of coal miners' leader Mother Jones, who wrote her own eulogy urging workers at her funeral, "Don't Mourn. Organize!", Local 8751 is especially proud of grievance settlements won for the families of Meschac Alexandre, Audrey Walker and Curfew Wilson. We miss them dearly. Local 8751 will Fight for Justice for every grievance until our last breath!



Farmworkers from southern Florida and hundreds of supporters marched to the tunes of Local 8751's sound truck from Copley Square to the Stop & (sweat) Shop in Brigham Circle Feb. 27th to demand "one penny more" for the tomatoes they pick. These Mexican and Haitian workers toil in the blazing sun, 10-12 hours/day, for 50¢ a 32 pound bucket (sometimes forced to work for free, in a state where modern slavery is a fact for many Black and immigrant workers.) photo: Steve Kirschbaum

FOLLOW THE MONEY

False "funding shortages" -- an excuse to attack our public services and union workers

Mayor Tom Menino cuts school, park and library services, telling us we have no money. It's not true.

We ended FY10 with a \$9 million surplus, while he kept us in fear of a \$30 million deficit.

http://www.boston.com/news/local/breaking_news/2010/09/boston_reports.html

In fact, Boston has had budget surpluses almost every year since he was elected, including the last few "crisis" years.

<http://www.bmrb.org/pdfsearch.asp?keywords=surplus&dataset=index&collection=0>

CITY AND STATE GIVE MILLIONS TO BIG DEVELOPERS

Liberty Mutual Insurance: **\$47 million**

<http://www.bostonherald.com/business/general/view.bg?articleid=1239154>

JPMorgan Chase: **\$4 million**

http://www.boston.com/business/articles/2008/04/30/city_offers_bank_4m_tax_break_to_relocate/

Manulife: **\$7 million**

http://www.boston.com/news/local/articles/2004/01/25/ig_says_tax_breaks_granted_as_favors/

Jurys Hotel: **\$ 5.5 million**

http://www.boston.com/business/articles/2008/04/30/city_offers_bank_4m_tax_break_to_relocate/

Westin Hotel: **15 years of tax abatement** for convention center hotel

<http://www.seaportalliance.org/SAND/Archive/020222commflat.html>

FILM CREDIT WASTES

\$150 MILLION A YEAR

"Oh, that credit is just for fun,"
says Governor's development czar

Dept. of Revenue report:

222 jobs for MA residents cost state
\$325,000 each; brings in 13 cents for
every dollar spent.

<http://www.commonwealthmagazine.org/News-and-Features/Online-exclusives/2011/Winter/Film-spending-flows-mostly-out-of-state.aspx>

BOSTON REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY STEALS OUR LAND AND OUR TAXES

Mayor approves BRA eminent domain taking of City-owned land without compensation. BRA sells or leases it and keeps all the money.

Thousands of parcels have been taken. Recent examples:

City Hall Plaza **\$400 million**

Hayward Place **\$23 million**

Dorchester Youth Center site: **\$2.4 million**

Taxes lost to tax-exempt BRA-owned properties worth about \$3 billion:

\$100 million a year. Menino could demand BRA Payments in Lieu of Taxes -- but he doesn't.

MENINO GAVE AWAY **\$40 MILLION** IN TAX BREAKS TO UNQUALIFIED REAL ESTATE INVESTORS IN ONE BEACON STREET TOWER

http://www.mysouthend.com/index.php?ch=columists&sc=city_streets&sc2=&sc3=&id=97681

Menino hands out "no bid" contracts
greater than \$10,000 annually, averaging
\$200 million annually.

Finance Commission Information

TWO DOZEN BIG COMMERCIAL PROJECTS ENJOY HUGE TAX BREAKS FOR DECADES UNDER CHAPTER 121A ("BLIGHT") e.g.:

Landmark Center, 1 Beacon, TDBankNorth Center, Prudential Center, New Boston Food Market, Post Office Square Garage, Genzyme, Harvard Energy Plant, Liberty Mutual at St.James/Arlington, Westin Hotel at Seaport Convention Center, Christian Sci Church land

Estimated annual tax loss: **\$50-70 million**

<http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/bostonherald/results.html?st=advanced&QryTxt=121A&By=>

Menino is sitting on **\$200-\$400 million** in secret funds, while crying poverty and slashing essential services.

<http://thephoenix.com/Boston/news/102055-moneybags-menino/?page=1#TOPCONTENT>

Menino gave **\$850,000** to Mark Maloney, former BRA Director, to subsidize Maloney's purchase of the YWCA building.

Boston Courant, Jan.14, 2011

Menino loan to W Hotel -bankruptcy may cost City: **\$10.5 million**

<http://www.commonwealthmagazine.org/Voices/Back-Story/2010/Fall/Intrigue-at-the-W.aspx>