

Main Street News Fall 2004

President Latko's Message:

Dear Sisters and Brothers:

The Board and I hope everyone had an enjoyable summer. As we move into the fall, many important issues confront this Union. Our plan is to not sit passively but, instead, to attack these issues, remain aggressive and achieve our collective goals. As always, we ask for your support, patience and confidence. I know patience is difficult during these strained times. The Authority's policy of doing more work with fewer workers is taking a toll on our members' morale. The Board and I would like to congratulate and recognize our members for doing such an excellent job under these difficult circumstances. You are a credit to your trade and your Union.

Our next round of contract meetings is scheduled for September and October. The negotiating team feels that these meetings will be the most important so far -- especially those in October. As the Authority's financial picture for next year becomes clearer, it is evident that the Union's demands are both reasonable and financially realistic. At these next meetings, we will find out whether the Authority is bargaining in good faith and sincerely wants to get a fair and reasonable contract completed. Accordingly, we need your support and confidence now more than ever.

Last month, a negotiations update was posted on each bulletin board. This update was drafted by the negotiation team for the specific purpose of responding to a few questions raised by some members. The Board and I are extremely happy to answer any questions that the membership may have regarding this Union. Finally, instead of listening to the rumors and innuendo, the members are coming to the Union representatives to find out the truth.

Proper negotiations are slow, deliberate and meticulous. If you want a fair contract that benefits you, then there is simply no way to speed up or rush the process. We are dealing with serious and fundamental issues that will have a lasting impact on this Union. These issues include major medical, a competitive welfare fund and a fair wage increase. Just because the Board states that it will not sign a contract without the current major medical structure for existing employees, does not mean the Authority will immediately comply. Just because our welfare fund demands are simply to maintain the current level of benefits and carry the recommended reserve, does not automatically translate into an agreement. Finally, just because we think a fair wage increase necessary to a fair contract, does not mean that the Authority will automatically write the check. We must fight for this contract as we fight for everything else. It may take time. However, we are confident in our ability and your patience. We expect a significant progress over the next couple of months. If such progress is made, a final resolution may not be far off.

Certain things disturb this Board from a fundamental/ideological perspective. For example, DOT performed tree cutting at the Angola Service Area. The Union feels that tree cutting is exclusive bargaining unit work and we filed an improper labor practice. Now, the DOT has intervened into the case and claims they have an interest in performing our work.

Specifically, the DOT claims that it has not only performed tree cutting for the Authority, but it has performed many tasks on Authority property in the past. The DOT's weapon is the Shared Services Agreement. You know, the agreement that allows them to use our salt sheds or to borrow vehicles. Now, the DOT is seeking to use that same agreement as a way to take our work away and the Authority is almost tripping over themselves to hold the door for them. If the Authority leaders in Albany and the other three Divisions have any sense of job preservation, they would be on our side and help the Union keep Authority work in the Authority and Union work in the Union. There was a time when the Authority set the standard. Now, DOT is setting the standard and dictating terms and conditions of employment to the Authority. We will fight this latest attack on our jobs with everything we have. We hope that the Authority will join us.

Although the grievance and arbitration schedule is still heavy, issues are being resolved at the local level more now than ever. We feel this is a direct result of the Union's commitment to file and pursue grievances whenever the contract is violated. Contrary to information you may have heard at some recent Meet-and-Greets, this Union does not file frivolous grievances. The Authority has yet to win one objection or had one grievance thrown out because it was not supported by the contract and/or past practice. Just because previous DOT employees may not be used to a Union that actually stands up to its employer when there are violations, does not mean that grievances are frivolous. Perhaps these former DOT employees should actually discuss the issues with the Union before it makes substantive comments based only in ignorance. I am available 24/7 and I am always willing to discuss these issues.

November 2, 2004 is arguably the most important day the United States will have in the last 12 years. It is the day the John Kerry will hopefully be elected as our next President. It is no secret that the Teamsters support Mr. Kerry, as does this Board. Workers' rights and real jobs in this country have been completely disregarded by the current administration. There is no greater issue than improving the life of the American worker. There is no greater task than keeping and creating real jobs and job growth in our country. Finally, the United States needs to return to its roots of protecting and fostering the role of organized labor here as well as abroad. We feel that John Kerry gets us much closer to those goals than does the current administration. Regardless of your political affiliation or views, please get out and vote on November 2nd. The only wasted vote is the vote not cast.

It is an honor to serve you. We are here to help and assist you to the best of our abilities. Please contact any of us if you have questions and concerns. We will always try to help you. We will work hard to resolve your issues to the best of our abilities.

Fraternally yours,
MARTIN A. LATKO

Martin A. Latko Receives Prestigious Appointment

On August 9, 2004, Local 72 President Martin A. Latko was appointed by the International Brotherhood of Teamsters as the new Eastern Region Area Director of the Public Services Division. President Latko was nominated by none other than Carl Haynes, esteemed Teamster and the current Director of the Public Services Division.

President Latko's new appointment is a tremendous honor and will not in any way infringe on his day-to-day responsibilities with Local 72. In short, the position puts President Latko in charge of assisting all public services unions from Maine to Virginia. President Latko will also be instrumental in all organization efforts for public service employees in the Eastern Region and especially with regards to efforts specific to public works employees, toll road employees and other civil service positions similar to Local 72 members.

The reason President Latko was appointed to the position was evident to anyone involved in the process. Mr. Haynes stated: "He (Latko) is the type of new Teamster leader that can take our organizing efforts in the public sector to new heights." Mr. Haynes went on to say: "Marty's passion, work ethic and devotion to his Local and the International is clear within the first two minutes you speak with him." Joel Sosinsky, Esq. is the Assistant Director of the Public Services Division and the Executive Assistant and Counsel to Local 237 President Carl Haynes. He was integral in the selection process and also knew that President Latko was the right person for the job. When asked about the appointment, Mr. Sosinsky stated: "Marty is the type of guy you want for this battle. He is outspoken, honest and works tremendously hard for Local 72. As the coordinator of the I.B.T. Public Services Division Conference, I needed a last minute replacement for someone to run an important workshop. I immediately thought of Marty and he did a wonderful job. He really opened a lot of eyes from a leadership perspective making him an easy choice for this appointment."

When asked directly about the appointment, President Latko said: "I am honored and humbled to receive this appointment. I feel this is a great achievement for me as well as Local 72. I will, as I always have, work hard for the International and Local 72. I am truly excited to be a part of a movement to expand and solidify unionism for the public sector and I will not disappoint those who have showed faith in my leadership." Local 72 General Counsel Kevin C. Clor, Esq., who works very closely with President Latko, had this to say: "I am not surprised (by the appointment). Marty is a great leader and makes people truly understand the power of the union. He will attack this new challenge like he attacked leading Local 72 -- full speed ahead. I think that within five years, a public services employee in the Eastern Region, who is not a Teamster, will be the exception and not the rule."

Clerical Reclassification Update

The reclassification requests of about forty-four titles have been submitted to Civil Service. To date about twenty requests have been answered. Three positions have been approved by Civil Service to be reclassified. Civil Service is allowing the Authority considerable time to respond to these reclassification requests. I have reviewed several of the responses that Civil Service has provided. I feel that Civil Service has been thorough in its review process and has made its determination based on the information that each of you have submitted for review. Those who have received a denial letter from Civil Service can appeal the determination IF your duties and tasks have significantly changed since your last request. Please remain patient, Civil Service will respond to each and every request.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions about the your reclassification request.

FRANK TRACEY, Local 72 Vice President

Union Wins Full-Time Toll Collector Staffing Grievance at North Bridge

--By Kevin C. Clor, Esq.

Arbitrator Joel M. Douglas issued a decision sustaining the Union's grievance in a case involving filling a permanent full-time toll collector ("FTTC") vacancy at North Bridge (Grand Island in Buffalo Division). Grievance 2192 (Kozak) was litigated over the course of two days in Buffalo and Albany.

Article 17.F of the contract mandates that the Authority fill FTTC vacancies where "traffic conditions" warrant filing the lines. The Union files a grievance in each case where a FTTC vacancy exists. This policy insures that the Union does not lose track of the line. In most cases, the Authority fills the vacancy. In this case, however, the Authority tried to reduce the full-time staffing at North Bridge from ten FTTCs to nine.

The Union argued that "traffic conditions" means traffic processed by toll collectors. If toll collector hours before the vacancy existed are the same or similar after the FTTC staff is reduced, then "traffic conditions" warrant filing the position. The theory is simple; if you cut staffing, then hours must also be reduced by, at the very least, the amount one FTTC would work. In this case, both traffic and hours worked at North Bridge increased after staffing was reduced. Further, the Union has won other identical cases where the arbitrators defined "traffic conditions" as traffic processed by toll collectors.

The Authority placed all of its eggs in the "Cindy Blest Traffic Study" basket. Basically, after the Union won an identical case in New Paltz, the Authority had Ms. Blest pioneer a staffing study to support their FTTC staffing figures. In order to justify what the Authority thinks is sufficient FTTC staffing, the study was based on three days in February -- the slowest traffic

month of the year. There were many other defects with the study and it, as well as Ms. Blest's testimony, was thoroughly rejected by the Arbitrator Douglas.

The Union hoped that three arbitration victories on this issue would be enough to fill the remaining vacancies where, as in this case, "traffic conditions" warrant filing the lines. The parties could simply analyze the traffic numbers and hours to determine if the line needs to be filled in accordance with the arbitrators' decisions. This system would be inexpensive and much cheaper than arbitrating each case. At a time when the Authority is crying poverty, it would seem logical to enter into a dispute resolution agreement that is sensible and cost effective. However, the Authority as informed the Union that it intends to litigate each vacancy that it has refused to fill -- no matter what. We accept the challenge and look forward to getting these lines filled as soon as possible.

LETTERS...

TEAMWORK(?)

After reading Don Bell's Division column in the Albany Division Update, I started thinking a lot about the "teamwork" he talks about. Teamwork and being part of a team, what a novel idea. Webster's dictionary defines a team as a "group of people working together in a coordinated effort."

In his article he compares us to a soccer team, which pulls together in adversity to win. Each person on the team pulls together to reach a common goal. In his article he keeps talking about "we" the team. Does he mean "we" the workers or "we" the Authority as a whole? If he does mean the Authority as a whole the picture isn't very clear. Why does it feel that we are on two different teams? Us vs. them? If we are really one big team then why do we have to fight for a contract nearly a year overdue? Why can't we be treated as teammates when members of our team will go to bat for us and not make things difficult for us?

If the Authority really wants to promote being a team then I think it should start showing it by offering us a fair contract without delays and having to fight tooth and nail for every little thing! That is after all what a team is all about? Are we one big team? Please let me know.

(Signed)

Name Withheld Per Request

To Err Is Human

Dear MSN:

I'm writing this note on behalf of all those getting slammed with JCM's for deposit errors on the Thruway's great new system. What was wrong with the old one? Nothing, except there was more room to be human.

As for myself after starting part time in 1981 and then full time in 1984, I have made many mistakes throughout the years. Of course, fumes, noise, and stress do not affect EZ-Pass. But then EZ-Pass is not human. After 23 years the Thruway has scheduled me for retraining because of two errors. They also have warned me that if this continues they may dismiss me.

After 23 years I still have not received my 20-Year Service Award. Do you think someone in Albany made a mistake? And, do you think they will get a JCM and a threat? I'm sure there are no humans working in Albany either and they don't make two mistakes in a month either. "I'm sorry we are only three years late. Thanks, keep up the good work." Robots can't give directions can they? Are our customers human?

(Signed)

Name withheld per request

Safety First

Dear MSN:

"Safety first." "There's always time for safety."

I recently heard both of these expressions at a Syracuse Division Safety meeting. Let me tell you what some Unit 1 employees observed in May 2004 in Syracuse's Thompson Road Complex.

One sunny day, I was sitting outside with several other employees during our lunch break (12 to 12:30 PM). We have to walk from our assigned work locations to get to the employee parking lot, and to return to work after going out for lunch. Division Bridge and Facilities are across the "driveway" of the yard. Employees often walk from Inventory or Division Garage across the "driveway" to get to Division Bridge or Facilities. We saw a blue Jeep with TWY plates speeding as it was exiting the maintenance yard. We estimated the speed at 30 MPH. Posted speed at the entrance to the yard is 5 MPH.

It seems we either have a double standard for Management or John Baldwin needs to be trained on how to read a speed limit sign.

(Signed)

Name withheld per request

FLASH! "We Surrender"

We the mechanics of Stalag 17, formerly the Buffalo Division Garage, give up.

The garage is in deep trouble. Why, you ask? Well, we are six - yes six - mechanics down and the leaders of Stalag 17 want us to work harder and faster to get all 59 trucks finished. What do they want? Blood?

They want us to work three nights a week overtime. It seems that our life at home, our families, and the work needed around our homes do not mean a thing. Also, if you refuse to work overtime, it's insubordination.

My big question is, "Why didn't Buffalo Garage get some summer help?" Do not tell me because of the budget crunch. If that were true, then how come Section 6, Division Highway and Building Maintenance received summer help.

If these departments got summer help then why did the most important part of the Thruway, the garage, not receive any summer help? Could it be our bosses are trying to impress Albany or prove they can do the same amount of work with fewer men? Maybe they will receive a bigger bonus at the end of the year.

The bosses of the Buffalo Garage are killing the morale of the men. Most of the men are just going through the motions. A lot of the men would rather stay home than come to work. I think they (the mechanics) would rather shovel snow, mow the grass, do anything rather than come to work at Stalag 17.

So Buffalo is no longer perfect.

(Signed)

A sick of working, disgusted
and morale-drained mechanic
Name withheld per request

Soap Nazi

On several episodes of the television show Kramer, there was a character called the "Soap Nazi" and from what I understand this is a real live person in New York City. Well, brothers and sisters, believe it or not, we have one here at the New York State Thruway Authority. I feel that I am an educated intelligent man and as an auto body mechanic I have painted many, many vehicles and equipment, as well as designed, built and painted many other items for the Thruway Authority.

At 7:00 AM on August 2, 2004 our Mr. Jim Blanchard called me into the office and - are you ready for this brothers and sisters - he tells me that I am using too much hand soap! He asked me if there was anything else I could use to wash my hands with. I said, "No there isn't." He then tells me to find something else to wash my hands with. What the heck am I supposed to do, who do I talk to, who do I write to? Why doesn't Jim Blanchard have anything better to do than to keep track of hand soap usage?

Help!

Sincerely,
GEORGE L. MATHIEBE SR.

Teamster's Women's Conference Report

It was with great pride and privilege that I attended the Teamsters Women's Conference in Orlando, Florida this past March.

I met women from all walks of life from all over the country. All had one common goal - Solidarity. Women are very important members of the workforce and the labor movement. We make up nearly half of the national workforce. Still, in many businesses women earn less than their male counterparts; and in some instances are at or below the minimum wage. Of course, these women are not in a union. Teamster women earn equal pay for equal work.

While at the conference I was able to attend several workshops. I attended Contract Negotiations for Teamster Activists. In this class we learned how unions are judged by how effectively they organize new members and bargain good contracts for their members.

The Women's History workshop was an overview of the history of women in the Teamsters, highlighting key events that had a huge impact on women members and their role in the union. I also attended a workshop on Personality Differences and how they affect co-workers and their ability to perform job duties.

These workshops were just a few of the workshops I attended to learn how to do my job under the pressures of the "do more with less" that we are so often reminded about these days.

There were also guest speakers from Stewards all the way to Congresswomen. I was quite humbled by the accomplishments of so many women who were up against so much. Many of these women faced challenges in the past and made many achievements so that today's Teamster women can have the direction and benefits that we otherwise would not have had.

As a Teamster woman I hope that the women of today's union continue to be involved and to strive to make changes for the better as well as to provide future Teamster women with strong traditions and commitments.

-- JILL BERTOLLINI
Chief Shop Steward, Syracuse

From Counsel Kevin C. Clor.....

Article 11.B -- Emergency Call-Out Language Taking Shape

"Ambiguity" is one of the most confounding legal terms in my profession. Basically, it means that a word or phrase may not mean what everyone thought it meant. Sound confusing? It is. Over the last couple of years, the Union and the Authority have been fighting over apparent ambiguities in Article 11.B -- Emergency Call-Outs ("ECO"). It started with the Raul Agosto case in Buffalo Division and, hopefully, will be ending soon. This update is a summary of events to date.

Raul Agosto was called in to work to fix a hydraulic line. When the repair was finished, instead of going home, he was required to perform transmission work on a truck that had been in the shop for 2 weeks. The Union argued that this second assignment was not an emergency and, accordingly, should not have been assigned during an emergency call-out. Instead, the work on the second vehicle should have been performed on straight time or scheduled overtime.

Arbitrator Cervola issued a now famous split-decision. In his ruling, Arbitrator Cervola did not decide if the second assignment was an emergency, but stated that each assignment created separate call-outs and were to be paid as separate call-outs under Article 11.B. Basically, Agosto was to be paid time-and-a-half for the hydraulic line and a minimum of four hours of overtime for the transmission work. As a result of this decision, the Union began to file grievances alleging separate pay for each assignment in an effort to force the Authority to only assign emergencies during emergency call-outs. The Authority countered by initiating a policy where supervisors would ask employees if they wanted a four-hour overtime opportunity as opposed to asking the employee to remedy a specific emergency.

There have been several arbitrations and an improper labor practice filed since the Agosto case. Notably, Arbitrator Sherman rejected the Agosto case on the issue of pay, but emphatically stated that only true emergencies can be assigned during an emergency call-out. That ruling was also echoed in a decision issued by Arbitrator Pohl. Thus, tracking the line of case law on this issue, the case where the Union argued that ECOs are only for emergencies, the arbitrator ordered separate pay. In the cases where the Union argued separate pay, the arbitrators ordered that 11.B is only for emergencies. Surely, it is a convoluted means to the desired end -- namely, ECOs are for emergencies only. Accordingly, the Union won the Agosto case, but not until a different arbitrator made a separate ruling in a different case. I love this job!

We are closer to an ultimate resolution on this issue. Pursuing the Agosto pay issue was our only defense to what the Union perceived as the Authority abusing the ECO language and requiring employees to stay all four hours even though no emergency was evident. Now, after the recent decisions, the integrity and purpose of 11.B has been restored.

There are more grievances and a pending improper labor practice on this issue. We will keep you informed as to the status of these cases.

Trying To Get On The "A List"

By Kevin C. Clor, Esq.

Everyone wants to be on the "A list", especially now more than ever. Not the social "A list", but the Civil Service A list. What is the A list? What follows is a brief discussion on this issue.

Recently, Civil Service issued the Bridge Maintenance Supervisor I test. When the results were released, candidates were divided on two lists; A and B. When filling a vacant BMS I position, an employer is required to exhaust the A list before moving to the B list. A list is exhausted when there are less than three acceptors on the list. This policy is not new and has been around since the beginning. However, this is the first time it has been applied to the BMS I test. On its face, it seems to create an unfair situation where a B list candidate scored much higher than the A list candidate who has a vested interest or legal entitlement to the position. A closer look, however, reveals that the policy actually protects employees who are in the direct line of promotion the BMS I vacancy -- namely, the Bridge Repair Mechanics ("BRM"). Indeed, Thruway Maintenance Workers ("TMW") and Bridge Repair Assistants ("BRA") are eligible to take the BMS I test even though their next promotional step is to the BRM position. What the A and B list designation provides is that all eligible BRMs will be offered the BMS I promotion prior to TMWs and BRAs. In short, it protects the integrity of the promotion line. I hope this summary answers any questions you may have had. Although the A and B list policy is not utilized in all cases, Civil Service reserves the right to implement it at any time.

Handicapping The Presidential Race

By Kevin C. Clor, Esq.

So, who are you going to vote for; Bush or Kerry (my apologies to Nader)? This simple question will probably illicit a disproportionately long and overly emotional response. It is the question that should never be asked at dinner or in any social situation where you just want to relax and have pleasant conversation. It is, in my opinion, the forbidden subject. I am always amazed at how open complete strangers are on personal subjects such as sex, family problems and other apparently private issues, but a reasonable discussion of who is best to lead our country is off limits. Since people are so uncomfortable with this issue and seemingly never want to reveal their preferences for fear of ridicule, I decided to do a quick article. After all, I am somewhat qualified. I have a political science degree that focused on democracy and electoral politics and, most importantly, I vote.

No one truly knows why we vote the way we do. Some people vote party line, others pick and choose. Some vote the way their parents did, others, like me, are diametrically opposite to the politics of their family. Some vote based on their perception of the economy, while others vote based on the budget deficit. Some like incumbents and some like new faces. Finally, some, more than you think, have no idea why they voted the way they did. All in all, it is nearly impossible to handicap the presidential race, but there are some guidelines.

Guideline 1: A good or stable economy favors the incumbent. Voters usually draw a parallel between strong presidential leadership and a stable, growing economy. This is interesting considering that the President has much less to do with the economy than with other social and international issues. This guideline would seem to favor Kerry.

Guideline 2: The incumbent usually wins when we are at war. True, but not always. If there is strong support for the war, the incumbent usually does win. If the public is against the war, like Vietnam, incumbency is not looked upon as a favorable attribute. Since we are split on Iraq and polls indicate that Kerry and Bush are statistically tied on the issue of fighting terror, this guideline is a push.

Guideline 3: No one who says they will raise taxes can win. The first Bush said no new taxes, raised taxes and lost. Clinton never actually said he would raise taxes won, raised taxes, got impeached and won re-election by one of the largest margins in modern electoral politics (fascinating). The current Bush issued tax cuts. Kerry, while not being too specific, said he would raise taxes on the top 1%. This guideline favors Bush.

Guideline 4: Press and research polls influence voters. As for the popular vote, yes they do. However, polls have a margin of error around 4% to 6%. Most states are decided by less than that, which makes the polls irrelevant. Polls do influence undecided voters though. Most people want to hitch their wagon to a winner. If you are undecided and see that one candidate is firmly leading, chances are you will vote for that candidate. As of now, polls favor Kerry. Zogby.com is the best if you want to keep track.

Guideline 5: High voter turnout favors the Democrats. There are more registered Democrats than Republicans, by far. However, more Republicans vote. Elections with higher turnouts would favor the party with more registered voters. This guideline, I am guessing, favors Kerry. With the recent Michael Moore documentary and a tremendous amount of anti-Bush books and programs, I think voter turnout will be high and many of those voters will favor Kerry.

These are just a few guidelines that shape prognostications regarding presidential elections. There are more. All in all, the popular vote will be close, as usual. As for the electoral count, I predict a relative landslide.

As for whom I think will win. Well, the guy I intend to vote for will win, by a lot. If you ask me who that is, my response is simple -- **see paragraph one.**

Local 72 Participates In 2004 I.B.T Public Services Division Conference

Local 72 is usually well represented at the Teamster's Public Services Division Conference. This year, however, Local 72 not only attended the conference, but it also participated in presenting some relevant topics to Teamsters from across the country. Local 72 President Martin A. Latko was asked at the last minute to fill in and lead a roundtable discussion on workplace violence. Local 72 Chief Legal Counsel Kevin C. Clor, Esq. conducted two seminars on effective collective bargaining in the public sector. Both programs were very well received by those in attendance.

Joel Sosinsky, Esq., the Assistant Director of the Public Services Division and the Executive Assistant & Counsel to the President for Local 237 is responsible for organizing the conference each year. He was very pleased with the topics covered and the feedback for the programs presented by Local 72's representatives. "Marty and Kevin did an excellent job in their preparation and presentation. The feedback for both (Latko and Clor) was great and we hope to have each back in the fold for next year's conference. I was especially impressed by Marty because he was asked at the last minute. As it turned out, he filled in for the previous Eastern Region Area Director of the Public Services Division -- the same position he (Marty) was just appointed to." When asked if the roundtable was possible a tryout for President Latko's new appointment, Mr. Sosinsky replied: "I don't know if it was a try out, but his performance at the conference certainly made the decision (to appoint Latko) much easier."

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-- Submitted by Jackie Turo, Albany Division Truck Shop

New York Post Articles Triggers Response From Twy. Toll Collectors

Let us begin by stating that we are not proponents of abusive behavior. Our fellow toll collectors should watch their language; we are behind the motorists on that one. However, we know from years of experience the urge to express your frustration at the person who is causing it. We each see in excess of 1500 people a day; 90% of them are civil, another 5% (or more) are actually polite and friendly. That leaves 4 or 5 % who ruin it for all of us.

The following are a few of the comments from collectors when they saw their profession trashed in the newspaper. We've compiled some personal pet peeves, some true stories and some replies to complaints listed in the newspaper article and on the Smoking Gun website.

- * A seemingly innocent question - like "How do I turn around?" - becomes obnoxious when you have answered it 250 times in the last four hours. That number is NOT exaggerated.

- * A red light at a toll barrier means the same thing it does in the rest of the state. STOP! The lane is closed. Do not enter it. The collector is trying to close the lane. There are any number of reasons I might be closing the lane; ranging from I have to use the bathroom to an equipment malfunction to the state police have radioed ahead and need a lane cleared for them to pass through at a high rate of speed. You are not excused from the red light policy just because you have an EZ-Pass.

- * Please don't have a fit (i.e. - clear your throat repeatedly, yell "excuse me," tap change against the door, or turn your car stereo up loud to get my attention) if you see me on the telephone. Nine out of ten times, I am calling a tow truck for a disabled vehicle or an ambulance for a sick or injured motorist. That could be you someday and I promise that I will extend you the same courtesy!

- * I didn't spill coffee, soda or anything else on your money. You did. I don't think I should have to clean it. Tollbooths are not equipped with sinks. If your money is dirty or sticky, please take it home, wash it and use it the next time. If it is the only money you have, please give me fair warning so that I can grab a tissue or paper towel before I touch it.

- * To the patron who got the answer "whatever" when asking for a receipt, that sounds more like the collector was having a bad day than anything else. It happens; we're human. It shouldn't happen, but it does. It's not your fault that someone else is having a bad day. We are sorry.

- * Please don't ask me for directions if you are going to argue with them after I have given them to you. Please have some general idea of where you are going. I have been yelled at, cursed at, had things thrown at me (including change, soda, coffee) and have been spit at. This generally happens when I don't know how to get to a person to their destination. I have a basic knowledge of all the main highways in NY but it really never crossed my mind that I should be memorizing every exit number on every highway in MA, ME, NJ, etc. I don't work in those states. I am not a walking Atlas.

- * If I am giving directions to a motorist in front of you, honking your horn only hinders the situation. It means that I have to repeat myself several times until that person can actually hear me. Honking your horn actually causes further delay and it gives me a headache. Please refrain.

- * Don't give me money with same hand that is holding a lit cigar or cigarette.

- * Please unfold your paper money. I've gotten a hundred dollar bill wrapped up in singles. That particular time I was able to stop the patron. But we can't tell if anything is wrapped up inside paper money when you give it to us rolled up in a ball. We've had anthrax scares from powdery substances found in balled up paper money. We truly do not appreciate it; neither do the state police or the local HazMat teams.

- * Don't take money directly from your mouth and put it my hand. Forget all the hygiene issues involved with this one, I simply do not want your saliva in my palm. I don't spit in your hand now, do I?

* It's not my fault that you are lost. You are driving, not me. I didn't paint the signs, I didn't hang the signs, but I have read the signs and they make perfect sense to me. I will help you if I can but please don't yell at me.

* To that person who paid with pennies, the collector over-reacted. Yes, pennies are legal tender. But I would like for you to imagine your reaction if you were given a handful of pennies as change from a dollar bill. Be honest with yourself! How would you react?

* This one is for EZ-Pass tag holders. If the sign reads, 'Call EZ-Pass,' and you ask me what that means, I am going to reiterate exactly what the sign reads because that is exactly what the sign means. Call EZ-Pass! There is either something wrong with your account or with your tag. They are an entirely separate entity. I don't have the answers to your questions.

* Don't be angry with me because I am not multi-lingual. English is the national language of the country in which I work. If there is another collector working who speaks the language that you do, I will put you in touch with that person. If you have a cell phone and a translator you can contact, I will gladly speak to that person.

* Do not, and I mean, do not EVER, hold your toddler out the car window to pay the toll. It is not cute. It is dangerous. Toll barriers frequently have minor rear-end accidents. Use your imagination to think of the possible horrors of this situation. Children belong in the back seat wearing their seatbelts; this is a law for a reason--a good reason.

* I work in a very noisy environment. Between tractor-trailers, motorcycles, bad brakes, bad mufflers and very loud car stereos, I cannot always hear your questions. I am not ignoring you.

* I have an intercom in my booth. Sometimes I use it to interact with my fellow collectors to get information, directions I don't personally know, etc. This is also how I learn about accidents, the need for ambulances and tow trucks, road closures, Amber Alerts, and any State Police activity. If I ask you to wait for a minute while I have my ear close to listen to it, there is a reason for it. It is a very important part of my job. This may sound like an exaggeration, but it is not --- people can die if I don't hear announcements and make the proper reactions to them.

* To the patron who unwillingly became a part of the snowball incident, the phrase "It's all fun and games until someone gets hurt," comes to mind. The guys in question should have made sure there were no vehicles in the plaza - absolutely. I don't think I would have taken the time to write a letter about it because nobody was hurt, but I would like to thank you for pointing out that the collector came over immediately to apologize. You are right, safety needs to come first.

* I am a toll collector, not a voyeur. If you feel the need to be intimate with your partner, I will gladly give you directions to the nearest motel. I do not want to watch. And I don't care what anyone says, that has to be distracting to the driver.

* To the woman (or women) who was leered at, I doubt the male collector is as much a sexual deviant as he is a moron. It is probably just a way to pass the time for him and you are right, you should not have to deal with that!

* As a female collector, I have received enough phone numbers to start my own phone book. I have been asked out, propositioned, proposed to. I have had male motorists wait for me in the parking lot at the end of my shift, expose themselves to me, and profess their undying love. This is not flattering. It is creepy!

* To the person who signed over the \$15 check to the collector, that sounds like outright thievery. For that we have no explanation. It was wrong. We don't care what kind of day that collector was having. That person has no place in our profession.

We could come up with many more if we checked with other collectors or kept notes. The website shows there are millions upon millions of transactions and 15 or 20 complaints in eleven months; several of which can be explained as a bad day or bad judgment -- not a bad ratio we think!

The Dangers of Being A Toll Collector

By Trustee Gerry Flint

This article was taken from the IBT website about the dangers associated with being a toll collector. The job of a toll collector is becoming much more dangerous. Local 72's Secretary-Treasurer Terrance Eldridge along with Trustees Gerry Flint and Colleen Caterinicchio, with the assistance of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) and the IBT Public Services Trade Division and the Teamster Safety and Health Department, have started a safety Consortium. The Consortium was formed to develop safer toll plazas and safer highway environment. For more information about the Consortium you may go to our website at: www.local72.org/mainstreetnews

Article:

An Island In A Sea Of Danger

Recent Tragedy Emphasizes Safety Risks To Toll Workers

June 16, 2004

A recent crash on the Massachusetts turnpike was a sober reminder to toll booth workers just how dangerous their jobs can be these days. An out-of-control ten-wheeled box truck hit a lane barrier, then slammed into a tollbooth, killing the driver, but miraculously spared the life of the toll collector.

"The toll collector had just stepped out of the booth and was less than 20 yards away," said Robert F. Cullinane, Secretary-Treasurer of Local 127, which represents the 500 toll workers. "People think this kind of accident is an unusual occurrence. It's not. Safety is a major issue for these workers."

Safety concerns have escalated for toll workers on major interstate highways over the last few years with the increased use of "fast pass" prepaid toll decals by motorists. Fast pass programs, designed to ease congestion in toll areas, have created disturbing consequences for motorists and toll workers alike.

"Drivers are supposed to slow down as they go through fast pass lanes, but never do," said Jay Steinberg, a tollbooth worker. "They gun right through here with little regard for other drivers or the workers in the toll areas."

Other safety and health concerns for toll workers, such as carbon monoxide poisoning, ergonomic issues and noise levels, get little attention at all.

The Massachusetts Turnpike Authority has installed 10 speed monitor devices at various points along the entire turnpike, but are reluctant to add employee-requested rumble strips in each toll area, because some health officials fear it may induce heart attacks in at-risk motorists.

"Members of Local 127 have been asking for increased safety measures for years, but it seems to fall on deaf ears," Cullinane said. "State officials say they do their best on safety. Clearly it's not enough."

BUSH'S MEDICATIONS

A new book we just discovered: *Bush on the Couch: Inside the Mind of the President*, by Dr. Justin Frank, a psychiatrist-and a Democrat-who heads the psychiatry department at the George Washington University Medical Center, finds President Bush to be a man who "consistently exhibits an array of multiple, serious, and untreated symptoms."

The good doctor's prescription? "Our sole treatment option -- for his benefit and ours -- is to remove President Bush from office... before it is too late."

The book got minimal media attention, and when asked about it, the White House press spokesman, Scott McClellan, said, "I don't do book reviews."

The *Washington Post* did report, in passing, that Dr. Frank's book says Bush "exhibits sadistic tendencies and suffers from character pathology, including grandiosity and megalomania viewing himself, America, and God as interchangeable." The *New York Times* barely mentioned *On the Couch*, burying it briefly in a "Health and Fitness" column on a little-read page of the C-section.

We have seen no regular news media follow-ups to confirm or deny it, but there have also been repeated claims on the Washington website Capitol Hill Blue -- www.capitolhillblue.com -- that President Bush has been taking anti-depressant medication that confuses and disturbs him -- and rattles his staff. The website says the White House did not return its calls seeking comment.

In London, the Guardian cited the Capitol Hill Blue report that Bush "goes in one breath from quoting the Bible, to ranting obscenely about the media" as having "the ring of truth."

They may have based that not only on the distinguished psychiatrist's book and the Capitol Hill Blue reports, but also on some of the president's recent campaign statements. Here's one:

"Our enemies are innovative and resourceful, and so are we. They never stop thinking about new ways to harm our country and our people, and neither do we." Got it?

(From the September 1, 2004, issue of *The Washington Spectator*)

-- By Garrison Keillor, August 26, 2004

Something has gone seriously haywire with the Republican Party. Once, it was the party of pragmatic Main Street businessmen in steel-rimmed spectacles who decried profligacy and waste, were devoted to their communities and supported the sort of prosperity that raises all ships. They were good-hearted people who vanquished the gnarlier elements of their party, the paranoid Roosevelt-haters, the flat Earthers and Prohibitionists, the antipapist and antiforeigner element. The genial Eisenhower was their man, a genuine American hero of D-Day, who made it OK for reasonable people to vote Republican. He brought the Korean War to a stalemate, produced the Interstate Highway System, declined to rescue the French colonial army in Vietnam, and gave us a period of peace and prosperity, in which (oddly) American arts and letters flourished and higher education burgeoned and there was a degree of plain decency in the country. Fifties Republicans were giants compared to today's. Richard Nixon was the last Republican leader to feel a Christian obligation toward the poor.

In the years between Nixon and Newt Gingrich, the party migrated southward down the Twisting Trail of Rhetoric and sneered at the idea of public service and became the Scourge of Liberalism, the Great Crusade Against the Sixties, the Death Star of Government, a gang of pirates that diverted and fascinated the media by their sheerchutzpah, such as the misty-eyed flag-waving of Ronald Reagan who, while George McGovern flew bombers in World War II, took a pass and made training films in Long Beach. The Nixon moderate vanished like the passenger pigeon, purged by a legion of angry white men who rose to power on pure punk politics. "Bipartisanship is another term of date rape," says Grover Norquist, the Sid Vicious of the GOP. "I don't want to abolish government. I simply want to reduce it to the size where I can drag it into the bathroom and drown it in the bathtub." The boy has Oedipal problems and government is his daddy.

The party of Lincoln and Liberty was transmogrified into the party of hairy-backed swamp developers and corporate shills, faith-based economists, fundamentalist bullies with Bibles, Christians of convenience, freelance racists, misanthropic frat boys, shrieking midgets of AM radio, tax cheats, nihilists in golf pants, brownshirts in pinstripes, sweatshop tycoons, hacks, fakirs, aggressive dorks, Lamborghini libertarians, people who believe Neil Armstrong's moonwalk was filmed in Roswell, New Mexico, little honkers out to diminish the rest of us, Newt's evil spawn and their Etch-A-Sketch president, a dull and rigid man suspicious of the free flow of information and of secular institutions, whose philosophy is a jumble of badly sutured body parts trying to walk. Republicans: The No.1 reason the rest of the world thinks we're deaf, dumb and dangerous.

Rich ironies abound! Lies pop up like toadstools in the forest! Wild swine crowd round the public trough! Outrageous gerrymandering! Pocket lining on a massive scale! Paid lobbyists sit in committee rooms and write legislation to alleviate the suffering of billionaires! Hypocrisies shine like cat turds in the moonlight! O Mark Twain, where art thou at this hour? Arise and behold the Gilded Age reincarnated gaudier than ever, upholding great wealth as the sure sign of Divine Grace.

Here in 2004, George W. Bush is running for reelection on a platform of tragedy: the single greatest failure of national defense in our history, the attacks of 9/11 in which 19 men with box cutters put this nation into a tailspin, a failure the details of which the White House fought to keep secret even as it ran the country into hock up to the hubcaps, thanks to generous tax cuts for the well-fixed, hoping to lead us into a box canyon of debt that will render government impotent, even as we engage in a war against a small country that was undertaken for the president's personal satisfaction but sold to the American public on the basis of brazen misinformation, a war whose purpose is to distract us from an enormous transfer of wealth taking place in this country, flowing upward, and the deception is working beautifully.

The concentration of wealth and power in the hands of the few is the death knell of democracy. No republic in the history of humanity has survived this. The election of 2004 will say something about what happens to ours. The omens are not good.

Our beloved land has been fogged with fear; fear, the greatest political strategy ever. An ominous silence, distant sirens, a drumbeat of whispered warnings and alarms to keep the public uneasy and silence the opposition. And in a time of vague fear, you can appoint bullet-brained judges, strip the bark off the Constitution, eviscerate federal regulatory agencies, bring public education to a standstill, stupefy the press, lavish gorgeous tax breaks on the rich. There is a stink drifting through this election year. It isn't the Florida recount or the Supreme Court decision. No, it's 9/11 that we keep coming back to. It wasn't the "end of innocence," or a turning point in our history, or a cosmic occurrence, it was an event, a lapse of security. And patriotism shouldn't prevent people from asking hard questions of the man who was purportedly in charge of national security at the time.

Whenever I think of those New Yorkers hurrying along Park Place or getting off the No.1 Broadway local, hustling toward their office on the 90th floor, the morning paper under their arms, I think of that non-reader George W. Bush and how he hopes to exploit those people with a

little economic uptick, maybe the capture of Osama, cruise to victory in November and proceed to get some serious nation-changing done in his second term.

This year, as in the past, Republicans will portray us Democrats as embittered academics, desiccated Unitarians, whacked-out hippies and communards, people who talk to telephone poles, the party of the Deadheads. They will wave enormous flags and wow over and over the footage of firemen in the wreckage of the World Trade Center and bodies being carried out and they will lie about their economic policies with astonishing enthusiasm.

The Union is what needs defending this year. Government of Enron and by Halliburton and for the Southern Baptists is not the same as what Lincoln spoke of. This gang of Pithecanthropus Republicanii has humbugged us to death on terrorism and tax cuts for the comfy and school prayer and flag burning and claimed the right to know what books we read and to dump their sewage upstream from the town and clear-cut the forests and gut the IRS and mark up the constitution on behalf of intolerance and promote the corporate takeover of the public airwaves and to hell with anybody who opposes them.

This is a great country, and it wasn't made so by angry people. We have a sacred duty to bequeath it to our grandchildren in better shape than however we found it. We have a long way to go and we're not getting any younger.

Dante said that the hottest place in Hell is reserved for those who in time of crisis remain neutral; so I have spoken my piece, and thank you, dear reader. It's a beautiful world, rain or shine, and there is more to life than winning.

And, You Think You Have A Bad Job!

The photos below show the deplorable conditions at two parking areas along the Thruway in the Albany Division. Kingston Section Maintenance is assigned to maintain these areas, although this issue is being addressed. The photos show how patrons abuse these areas.

I just wanted to show the Authority what our maintenance employees have to deal with.
-- *Frank Tracey, Local 72 Vice President*

Trash 1 – copy is:

Two Kingston Section maintenance workers on their daily clean up of the parking areas.



Trash 2 – copy is:

Garbage, like this half-eaten pizza, and wastes of all kinds are strewn all over these parking areas.



Trash 3 – copy is:

Yes, it is! Human feces along with the tissue - as if picking up garbage is not bad enough, the maintenance crew has this to deal with this situation too.



New Stewards Appointed

We would like to welcome the following members to Steward positions as follows:

DANIEL PALMER

Area 1, part time Steward

MARCIA SCHRAM

Area 4, part time Steward

HANK LINEK

Canandaigua Interchange, full time Steward