



Local 1277

News

November, 2019

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President's Report

59th ATU International Convention Was a Rousing, Productive Success

By Art Aguilar - President, Local 1277

I am pleased to report to you on the overall success of the ATU's 59th International Convention, which was held in Las Vegas, September 23 – 27, 2019. Even though greatly overshadowed by the untimely death of International President Larry Hanley, our gathering determinedly honored his legacy with a gathering that truly exemplified the spirit of our late, progressive leader.

International Secretary-Treasurer Oscar Owens opened the proceedings on Monday, the 23rd, with a wonderful video commemorating the life of President Hanley. The well-produced, very moving documentary brought tears to many eyes, and the delegates to their feet at the end.

Brother John Costa, International President since May, introduced himself to all the delegates, saying, *"It's my honor to serve as your International President. Like all of you, I owe a great deal to this Union. What has amazed me since I took office," he went on, "is the hard work, and the loyalty and commitment of so many people who have devoted their lives to the betterment of our members and of our Union. Together, our future will require that we must educate, we must motivate and, yes, brothers and sisters, we must activate."*

"So say it with me, Together We Fight, Together We Win!"

One of a number of speakers, Kafui Attoh, author of *"Right of Transit"*, warned the Convention, *"There are new dangers on the horizon, and they appear every time a 'clever' city administrator proposes Uber or Lyft as some quasi-replacement for mass transit or paratransit."* Mr. Attoh is right: As noted in the September 2019 paper, Uber has approached cities in the U.S. and Canada about "assisting" their mass transit systems (a sneaky first step towards taking them over outright).

On Tuesday, the 24th, Convention delegates unanimously adopted—by voice vote—a number of resolutions expressing the will of the ATU International, including, support for Medicare for All, Protecting the Right to Organize, safeguarding transit workers and pedestrians, and the election of a pro-labor, pro-mass transit administration next year.

Later that day, the Laws Committee presented its recommendations to the full Convention, including wording concerning the right of ATU members to engage in reasonable dissent over matters without the threat of union discipline, and the definition of violation of specific provisions of the ATU Constitution and General Laws (or bylaws of a specific local union). All their recommendations were approved by the delegates. On a personal note, I was proud to be selected to the Laws Committee for a second time.

On Wednesday, the delegates heard impassioned and informative speeches about the absolute importance of the ATU-COPE Fund. As you know, money is the lifeblood of political campaigns, and it is through the tireless and effective efforts of ATU-COPE that we make our voice—*your voice*—heard both during campaigns and in the halls of political power. Never forget organized labor's political credo: *"We support political friends and fight our enemies"*. With national elections coming up next year and statewide races here in California, our support for COPE is more important than ever.

On Thursday, the last full day of Union business, the delegates unanimously voted for Brother John Costa to serve as International President for the next three years. At the same time, Brother Javier Perez, Jr., was elected to another three-year term, and Brother Oscar Owens was elected for another term as International Secretary-Treasurer. I feel our International is in good hands with these brothers at the helm.

On another personal note, former ATU Local 1277 President, James Lindsay, was elected as 13th International Vice President. We wish Brother Lindsay continued success—even as the "unlucky" 13th IVP!

The Convention formally adjourned on Friday, September 27. It was a great success and another big step forward for our Union. *Please read the Officers' and Shop Stewards' reports in this month's—and December's—papers to learn how Local 1277 was represented and involved in the Convention proceedings.*

Organizing, Collective Bargaining And Strategies Committee

By Victor Rodriguez - Shop Steward, Long Beach Transit

Hello, brothers and sisters. First, let me thank the entire membership of ATU Local 1277 for nominating me as a delegate to our recent International Convention. I greatly appreciate your confidence in me and the opportunity to play a meaningful role in the future of our great Union.

I was proud to be selected as a member of our Organizing, Collective Bargaining and Strategies Committee. Our Committee was given the responsibility for reviewing and making recommendations—including any revisions and amendments—on all resolutions pertaining to the incredibly important areas of organizing and collective bargaining, which are nothing less than the lifeblood of the ATU and all organized labor.

Following spirited deliberations and give-and-take, we made our recommendations to the full convention regarding each resolution that had come before us. We passed two motions, one concerning legislation making it easier for workers to unionize. The second motion referred to general organizational tasks and responsibilities for the ATU International itself. We addressed the problem of fixing our profoundly broken labor laws so as to allow working people their basic human right to join the Union.

Further, we renewed our *commitment* to keep expanding the union movement in terms of strength and influence in both the public and private sectors throughout the United States and Canada. The Committee discussed community outreach and political/social mobilization of our members. Our important and indisputable conclusion: *We, the unions, have been bullied, kicked around, ignored and weakened long enough! We can no longer afford to live in our “bubble” of union shops—we have to work hard and fight to defend what we already have, and stick together to gain what working people and families need—and deserve—to make our lives and future better!*

Brothers and sisters, Together We Fight, Together We Win!



Maintenance Committee Report

By Monica M. Carney-Hayes
Shop Steward, CMF – Section A

As we met in the Skyview 3 Room to start discussing resolutions, we knew we had to come up with solutions about the concerns some ATU locals had about two resolutions, *H* and *I*.

Both resolutions dealt with maintenance workers and the skills they use while working in the various maintenance departments. They also recognize the mechanic as a skilled worker, which is exactly the recognition that many ATU maintenance workers want (and deserve) from management: To be thought of as skilled workers.

Resolution *H* concerned “*Enhancing Safety and Protection for Maintenance Workers*”. We read through the entire proposal and changed the wording in the “Further, be it resolved” section to read: “*That the ATU is committed to ensuring collective bargaining agreements with the highest safety levels for mechanics and all other ATU represented employees.*”

Resolution *I* discussed “*Ensuring Training and Recognizing the Achievements of Maintenance Workers*”. We agreed on wording that said that the ATU will support efforts to establish *national or industry-wide standards* that acknowledge and recognize the skilled work performed by our maintenance workers;

I would like to thank the members of ATU Local 1277 for supporting and voting for me to be a Delegate to the International Convention. It was a very special time for me. I now have a new view of what our officers have to do, and the responsibility they have representing our local.

New Technology, Apprenticeships And Jobs Committee Report

By Dean Boykin - Shop Steward, Division 18

It was certainly an honor for me to attend the recent ATU International Convention. I was further honored to be placed on the International's New Technology, Apprenticeships and Job Committee. Right off the bat, we had intense discussions on the newly emerging field of autonomous (self-driving) vehicles.

Our Committee's responsibilities included, among others, reviewing, recommending, and introducing new wording and revisions for all of the ATU's New Technology, Apprenticeship and Job resolutions. We wanted to be very sure that we had clear ideas before presenting our findings to the entire convention. After careful consideration and deliberation regarding each resolution, we shared our findings. We discussed the major challenges facing ATU members across this country and in Canada that are related to the matter of self-driving vehicles, as well as our future concerns and priorities in this field.

Is This the Future?

Imagine this scene, brothers and sisters: You're driving down the 405 (or any Southland) Freeway and you look over to the next lane ***and there is a mass-transit bus traveling with no Operator behind the steering wheel!*** Further, the bus is filled with passengers, who seem to be just fine about their driverless vehicle. Are your eyes deceiving you? Is this scene right out of the classic cartoon, *The Jetsons*?

The self-driving vehicle industry is backed by billions of dollars in funding from both automobile manufacturers and high-tech companies. They are more than eager to reap the potentially huge profits from this new technology. Along with our Committee members, I learned that both state and federal transportation officials clearly desire to try and speed up the development and deployment of self-driving vehicles.

I can assure you that our International Union is staying on top of these developments, and that we are at the forefront of efforts to create and implement strategies that protect our members ***and the mass-transit dependent public*** in the face of this technological revolution.

We are absolutely adamant that we, as a Union, as transit professionals charged with serving and protecting the public, ***are not at all ready to have our jobs "automated" away, especially when innocent lives may well be at risk. I firmly believe that a human can operate a bus far more safely than in, say, rush hour traffic than a self-driving vehicle can. At this time, we simply cannot rely on automated mass transit to guarantee our—and the public's—safety.***

Apprenticeship Programs

While serving on the Committee, I was surprised to learn that some ATU locals do *not* have an Apprenticeship Program at their workplaces. I gave my fellow Committee members some information about Local 1277's Joint Apprenticeship and on-the-job training programs that we have for Service Attendants at MTA.

While on the job, our members receive six months of classroom theory and technical experience in bus repair and maintenance, and they also experience six months of actual hands-on training at the jobsite. Union members, especially transit workers, must have a pathway for job advancement. I know we can establish this through collective bargaining and having a clear understanding of why working men and women may want to consider different job opportunities.

Finally, remember that driverless bus scene I drew earlier? It's true that it might, some day, be amazing to see a bus driving itself but, for now, we must be realistic. ***Even with new technology, nobody can replace our Operators and Mechanics. Nothing can replace the safety and warmth Operators convey to the passengers and communities we serve.***

It takes *real people*, like the dedicated members of our Committee, to fight strongly for the important work we do at MTA. I was proud to be part of that effort at the Convention. Thank you, brothers and sisters, for giving me the opportunity to reflect on my time on the Committee, and share with you some of our deliberations. I hope this was a nice little snapshot of what was going on there.



General Executive Board Report

By John DiRito - Executive Board Member-at-Large

Good morning, afternoon, and evening, brothers and sisters, I hope this paper finds you and your family well. Speaking of our fine Union, I was reminded of how fortunate we *all* are to be part of the ATU International. At our 59th International Convention, I thought it was great to see this large number of men and women, the backbone of mass transit across our nation and in Canada, who share the same ideas and goals for our working men, women and families.

I was honored to participate, not only as a Delegate, but also as a member of the General Executive Board (GEB). If you're not familiar with the Convention processes, don't worry, our own local Union is structured in many ways like our International. There was attendance taken, an accounting of delegates present, and a big effort to make sure they have proper qualifications. Additionally, there were committees that met throughout to report on the state of our Union.

In the GEB, we were tasked to reviewing the minutes and notes of Union transactions and votes throughout the year. We then agreed on a summary, which in turn was read during the Convention to all the delegates present. A telling-of-the-tale, if you will, about the business conducted by our International Executive Board, and how it has helped individual ATU locals, and even other trade Unions, so that we remain a force of solidarity throughout both nations!

I'm sure I don't need to tell some of our more senior (in seniority) members about the positive and vital rights we benefit from by being a part of a union! But sometimes we all need the reminder that there are others fighting the same fight, when we think we are alone. ***I am here to tell you, we are not alone!*** And to our newer brothers and sisters who have recently been hired, I say, ***"Welcome!"*** Don't ever be afraid to share some of your experiences from previous employment; often times, those who have come from non-union employment have the greatest appreciation for the solidarity union work brings.



It is easy to fall into the trap of thinking we are alone, whether that refers to our location, agency, or geographical area. As humans, we can succumb to the terrible thoughts of "nobody cares," and that's why I wanted to share a small portion of my experience at the Convention. ***We care: Your ATU family, your working brothers and sisters, and your Executive Board.*** We are all here to help each other light the way for a better tomorrow. As our newly elected International President John Costa said at the podium, ***"Together We Fight, Together We Win!"***

As we enter into this season of Thanks, I often like to take personal time to reflect on what I'm thankful for, and this year I have quite a full plate! First, I am still grateful to be serving as your E-Board Member at Large, even though you folks keep me (and the rest of the Board) quite busy! I am proud to be the voice for the fine working men and women of ATU Local 1277. I am also grateful that I have the means to provide for my family, and I take great pride in helping our ATU family secure those same provisions for their loved ones.

An extra important note: The holidays are often an exceptionally stressful time in people's lives, and I want to remind you that the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is available to those who may be struggling and feel they need to talk to someone outside the work place. Please, use this valuable resource if you feel you need to, because everybody needs help at some time. Your counseling through this program is always confidential.

Here are the upcoming Local 1277 membership meetings for November and December. Please make every attempt to attend the meeting for your unit. It's **your** Union, and we need your participation at our meetings! All members will receive credit for the meetings.

Tuesday, Nov 5: Los Angeles area members:
Tuesday, Dec 3: L.A. Building Trades Council, 1626 Beverly Blvd., Los Angeles. Morning Session 10:00 a.m. Evening Session 5:00 p.m.

Wednesday, Nov 6: Metrolink Unit members:
Wednesday, Dec 4: Union Offices, 1744 North Main Street. Morning Session 11:00 a.m.

Wednesday, Nov 6: Riverside area members:
Wednesday, Dec 4: 1074 E. La Cadena Dr., Riverside Morning Session 10:00 a.m. Afternoon Session 3:00 p.m.

Thursday, Nov 7: Palm Springs/SunLine members:
Thursday, Dec 5: Rebirth Temple of Faith, 1243 North Main Street Suite 115, Palm Springs Morning Session 10:00 a.m. Afternoon Session 4:00 p.m.

Thursday, Nov 7: Long Beach:
Thursday, Dec 5: Machinist Hall, 319 W. Broadway, Long Beach Morning Session 10:00 a.m. Afternoon Session 3:00 p.m.