

ATU 689 CINDER BED ROAD STRIKE!



THE FIGHT OF OUR LIVES!

A Special Update From
President Raymond Jackson



A MESSAGE FROM YOUR PRESIDENT RAYMOND JACKSON

Let me start by saying, the first 11 months of my administration has been full of action! It has been a pleasure serving as your president, just as I imagined. We've been working around the clock to build power for our members. Since January, there have been many questions about the inner workings of the Union and how we plan to proceed.

The one question that I hear almost daily is **"What's going on with Cinder Bed Road?"**

This special edition newsletter will hopefully answer (in detail) every question that you might have about Cinder Bed Road and our strike.

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- *How Has Local 689 Responded?*
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- *What Do We Want?*
- *How Do We Win this Fight?*
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**THIS UNION IS ON
THE MOVE! BUT WE
NEED YOUR HELP
TO END THIS
FIGHT ONCE AND
FOR ALL!**

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

**THE LABOR MOVEMENT WAS THE
PRINCIPAL FORCE THAT TRANSFORMED
MISERY AND DESPAIR INTO HOPE AND
PROGRESS.**

**OUT OF ITS BOLD STRUGGLES, ECONOMIC
AND SOCIAL REFORM GAVE BIRTH TO
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE, OLD-AGE
PENSIONS, GOVERNMENT RELIEF FOR
THE DESTITUTE AND, ABOVE ALL, NEW
WAGE LEVELS THAT MEANT NOT MERE
SURVIVAL BUT A TOLERABLE LIFE.**

**THE CAPTAINS OF INDUSTRY DID NOT
LEAD THIS TRANSFORMATION; THEY
RESISTED IT UNTIL THEY WERE
OVERCOME. WHEN IN THE THIRTIES THE
WAVE OF UNION ORGANIZATION
CRESTED OVER THE NATION, IT CARRIED
TO SECURE SHORES NOT ONLY ITSELF
BUT THE WHOLE SOCIETY.**

Speech to the state convention of
the Illinois AFL-CIO, Oct. 7, 1965



WHEN DID THIS FIGHT START?

In late 2017, WMATA announced that they would accept RFP (Request for Proposals) for the management and operations of the new bus garage located at 7900 Cinder Bed Road, Lorton, VA 22122. This meant, WMATA, via its General Manager, Paul Wiedefeld, was making a historic move to privatize, for the first time in WMATA's history, a new bus garage.

Like many others, Local Union 689 submitted our proposal for the work as well as began to open legal proceedings to challenge the move based on the language in our Collective Bargaining Agreement under Sections 110 – Subcontracting and 1975's 13c Agreement.

WHY WOULD WMATA DO THIS?

General Manager Paul Wiedefeld believes that privatizing our Public Transit System would help his “Back to Good” plan to “FIX” WMATA's problems. Wiedefeld misled customers and politicians that this move to privatize the Cinder Bed Garage would save WMATA money and improve the experience for riders.

Well, Paul's plan was wrong from the beginning. Hiring a private contractor to do the work at any division of WMATA doesn't save the Authority money; it fosters an environment of unsafe, untrained workers, and creates a liability for WMATA by hiring cheap labor.

Like anything in the world, you get what you pay for. Cutting corners on labor costs will result in decreased maintenance, worker injuries, and lower training standards. All of this just to save a few bucks!

Ultimately, Paul Wiedefeld isn't focused on just privatizing one bus garage. His plans have always been bigger than one garage. His goal is to break Local 689 itself! He has already sought proposals from private contractors for the entire Silver Line and Cinder Bed, he will move garage by garage until the entire WMATA system is run by low-bid bottom feeding contractors and every transit worker makes \$20 per hour.

This isn't speculation or just our best guess, we know this is their plan because this is what has happened in other transit systems across the world. There is a move across the world to take public transit systems and sell them off to private companies. But workers and riders are fighting back!

HOW DOES THIS PRIVATIZATION SCHEME WORK?

General Manager Paul Wiedefeld gave the contract to Transdev, a massive French multinational transportation corporation. Reporters still haven't been able to find details in the contract but we know that the deal gave Transdev \$89 million to operate the garage for three years, with options to extend the deal another two years.

Transdev, formally known as Veolia, has a business model like all other transit contractors. It gets contracts from local transit systems and then hires workers at starvation wages and pockets the difference as profit. Transdev then ships these profits back overseas to France in order to pay their CEO whose name is Yann LeRiche (which is French for "the rich"). Transdev is one of the biggest transportation contractors in this region and also runs the Fairfax Connector, Hubbard Road Paratransit facility, and will also run the Loudoun Commuter Bus.





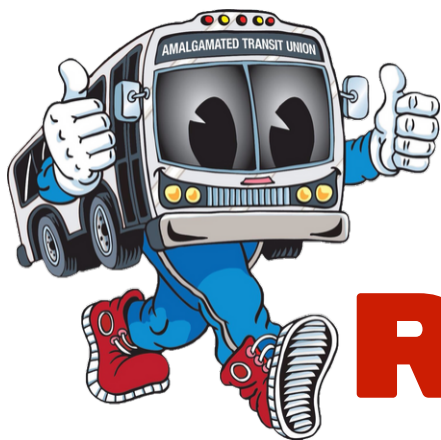
In the case of Cinder Bed Bus Garage, Transdev lures in workers with \$2,000 or \$3,000 signing bonuses. In some cases the workers there even thought they were working for WMATA's MetroBus, but only found out after they had signed up that they were working for a contractor. The contract with Transdev covers every employee operating out of the Cinder Bed Road to include bus operators, bus maintenance, utility workers, and custodial staff. No one is safe from privatization!

But this scheme is "a penny wise and a pound foolish," because even from the beginning things weren't going well with Transdev. When the garage first opened Transdev was unable to hire enough operators at their low wages that they had to fly in "SUB-CONTRACTORS" to drive the buses for a few weeks. This means that WMATA's contractor had to find another contractor to drive the buses while they tried to train enough people. The funniest part of this is that Transdev likely paid some company upwards of \$50 or \$60 per hour for these subcontractors. All of this is in the name of "saving money."

From what we're able to find out, WMATA basically gave the garage to Transdev and told them to run it for 3 years in accordance with certain guidelines set by their contract. WMATA then took approximately 90 buses from local garages and sent them to Cinder Bed Road for the contractor to operate service.

These buses were the absolute worst of the fleet and repeatedly fall apart, break down, and put passengers at risk. The Cinder Bed garage has regular MetroBuses, Metro signage on the building, some WMATA managers on the property, Metro Transit Police, and Metro routes moved from other Metro garages, but a contractor is allegedly "running the shop." This whole relationship is just a scam to try and break ATU Local 689, but we won't let them.

"WE DON'T GO LOOKING FOR A FIGHT. BUT IF YOU BRING US ONE, WE'RE GOING TO MAKE SURE WE WIN IT!"



HOW HAS LOCAL 689 RESPONDED?

When Local 689 got word of WMATA's plan to bring contractors to the new garage our leadership began to strategize. Local 689 partnered with its attorneys and International Union leadership to seek ways to stop the move through the courts. We sued WMATA for violating our collective bargaining agreement (CBA) and for violating Section 13c of the Urban Mass Transportation Act, which prohibits the use of federal development money being used to lower the standards or working conditions of unionized workers.

We also began a pressure campaign under Fmr. President Jackie Jeter to let WMATA and any contractor that might be interested in bidding on the contract that they had the fight of their lives on their hands if they chose to accept the contract. When WMATA held an "open house" at the newly built Cinder Bed property we held a rally outside. WMATA wanted to show off how beautiful the new building was, but instead wealthy contractors were greeted by hundreds of our members and retirees blocking the road.

When WMATA chose Transdev we knew we had to act fast. We went in to the new facility and began signing up members to the union.



We knew that our ultimate leverage over WMATA and Transdev was if we could win these workers a first-rate collective bargaining agreement, we could both prevent WMATA from ever doing this again and increase the likelihood that they brought this work back in-house. If we could organize these workers, we could eliminate WMATA's economic incentive to privatize.

When we tried to organize these workers we were thrown off the property, had the cops called on us, and were disrespected by the company. After a few months, on November 15, 2018 the workers at Cinder Bed Road joined Local Union 689. Bringing these workers into Local 689 meant that WMATA could no longer try to pit us against each other, private vs. public. Because when we stand united, against our real enemy WMATA, no one can stop us.



WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?

I won't pretend that everything with this campaign has been smooth sailing. We've had some ups and downs. After the Cinder Bed Workers joined ATU Local 689, we began our first negotiations with Transdev in February. Every negotiation session was one attempt after another by the company to stall, delay, or drag out the process. The company repeatedly violated the workers' rights by placing them under surveillance and intimidating them. By August the workers were so fed up with the company's antics that they demanded that there be a strike authorization vote. The very next day, our organizers were down at Cinder Bed garage with a strike authorization vote set up. The results were published that night and it was **UNANIMOUS** in favor of striking. Over 80% of workers, including many that drove in on their off day, voted in that election and it was only open for 12 hours.

After we took the strike authorization vote we hoped that the company would recognize how serious we were. At DASH, ATU had been able to achieve an INCREDIBLE contract with the highest wage rates in the entire region on the threat of a strike alone. But we underestimated how much WMATA was going to have the back of Transdev. The contractor didn't budge at all on their positions at the negotiating table. Every few weeks during negotiations, they would come up with some new excuse about why they didn't have a single response to our economic proposals for WMATA parity wages and benefits.

By October, we realized that this fight was not going to be won unless we went out on strike. We did not take this decision lightly. We understood that if we went out on strike, many of our members at Cinder Bed road would risk foreclosure, eviction, hunger, and economic hardship. But we knew that around this country, workers are on the move and strikes are the number one tool to make the bosses listen to us.

We began to plan for the inevitable, the first strike of a MetroBus garage in 41 years.



WHAT HAS HAPPENED SINCE THE STRIKE STARTED?

Transdev and WMATA have been blasted in the press and by the riding public for their failures to fix this issue. We've been blown away by the support that we've received.

We've received donations, letters of solidarity, volunteers on the picket line, and much more from National Nurses United, International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers, Transportation Workers Union, International Association of Machinists, International Brotherhood of Teamsters, Service Employees International Union, Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers International Union, International Association of Fire Fighters, UNITE HERE, Association of Flight Attendants, Communication Workers of America, United Food and Commercial Workers, Working America, American Federation of Teachers, Marine Engineers Beneficial Association, Professional Aviation Safety Specialists, Virginia AFL-CIO, Maryland AFL-CIO, the AFL-CIO Executive Leadership, and countless others.

We've even received letters of support from our sisters and brothers in the transport workers unions from around the world, including messages from Korea, New Zealand, Australia, Cote D'Ivoire, France, United Kingdom, Thailand, and India.

ATU International has supported us every step of the way and helped us with everything from logistical planning to financial support. President John Costa and his staff have been with us since day one. President Costa even made sure to send all of the new Presidents that visited the Tommy Douglas Center for trainings down to our picket line to gain some strike experience firsthand. President Costa has also mobilized every single Local President of a union that has Transdev workers and helped create a pressure campaign that will spread across the country.

Representatives Pocan, Wexton, Beyer, Connolly, and Raskin all sent messages of solidarity and demanded that WMATA intervene to apply pressure to the workers what they deserve. Importantly, these letters all questioned whether privatization was the right path forward for WMATA. We also received letters of support from countless Virginia Senators and Delegates, all of whom went on to win their elections on November 5th. We also received a crucial letter from the Fairfax Board of Supervisors and its incoming members demanding that Transdev return to the table. The letter from incoming Chairman Jeff McKay even went so far as to demand that Virginia revisit its 3% increase funding cap.

We received not one, but two messages of support from Presidential candidate Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT), where he said “Transdev cannot continue to put profits over people. Cinder Bed Road workers deserve fair pay, workplace protections, and good health care benefits. I am proud to stand with ATU Local 689 in their fight.” He later posted our event on his website and encouraged his grassroots organization Our Revolution Arlington to join us at our rally.

We’ve been overwhelmed with the solidarity that our longtime members have shown to our newer brothers and sisters at Cinder Bed. We’ve received donations of everything from firewood to food at the picket line! But we need to make sure that all of our members are prepared for whatever comes next when this fight grows beyond just one garage.



Bernie Sanders
@BernieSanders

Transdev cannot continue to put profits over people. Cinder Bed Road workers deserve fair pay, workplace protections, and good health care benefits. I am proud to stand with @ATULocal689 in their fight.



THIS UNION IS WINNING THE WAR OF PUBLIC OPINION!



WHAT HAVE WE DONE TO STAY BUSY WHILE ON STRIKE?



Despite being on strike, we still had some fun! We found time to write and produce a song by one of our strikers, Otis Price, called “Don’t Play With Our Money.” It became our anthem!

Our music video received over 60,000 views on twitter alone. We hired a local projectionist to display it on the WMATA entrance during the mornings and evenings so every single person walking into the building knows about our strike. We also brought a barber out to give people haircuts right next to the picket line.

One of our striking workers was pregnant and gave birth to a beautiful baby girl on Day 3 of the strike. By day 8, Sharita was back out on the picket line standing with her fellow workers. We’ve also celebrated workers’ birthdays on the picket line and found time to get them a cake!

WHAT DO WE WANT?

We want what we’ve always wanted. Fair wages and benefits for our members that allow them to live comfortable lives. We know that this is impossible if Transdev and WMATA win.

So for this strike to end we want one of two things:

- Either a fair collective bargaining agreement for the workers at Cinder Bed Road that gives them the same wages and benefits as regular WMATA employees. If we succeed with this it will eliminate all of the cost-savings of privatization and prevent WMATA from trying this again. This doesn’t mean that we give up our fight to bring in these workers as full WMATA employees.
- Or WMATA should kick out Transdev immediately and hire these Cinder Bed workers as full WMATA employees. This would end privatization before it spreads to other garages.



We win this fight by escalating pressure on WMATA and Transdev. It's that simple! Some days it may feel like this fight has gone on forever or has no end in sight, but that's because pressure builds up over time. Chris Townsend, the Director of Field Mobilization for the ATU International always compares strikes to lifting a heavy load of rocks with a rope and pulley. It will always seem like the rope is doing just fine until moments before it is about to snap when everything gives way. **Our job is to pile on the rocks and build pressure!**

WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP?

First and foremost, make sure that you're in constant contact with your shop steward. We need as many members involved in this fight as possible. They'll be your link to staying up to date on what's happening. The best leverage we have against WMATA and Transdev is a well-organized ATU Local 689.

1. Donate online at bit.ly/cinderbedstrike

We need donations to help workers pay for medicine and other specific needs at this time.

2. Sign up to bring food to the picket line!

Contact Todd Brogan (tbrogan@atu.org) if you would like to volunteer with this. We have to feed over a hundred people every day of the strike.

3. Donate firewood!

It's cold out there and we have two firebarrels to keep us warm! We burn about a chord of wood every couple of days. Please bring any firewood that you have to 7900 Cinder Bed Road, Lorton, VA. We've received donations from union members across the region.

4. Join us on the picket line!

Come join us on the picket line! We're there Mondays through Fridays from 5AM to 4PM and on weekends from 9AM to 4PM. The picket line is a great place to meet L689 members from different garages and learn about the fight we're facing.

5. Talk to your co-workers about the strike!

There is nothing that Wiedefeld fears more than Local 689 on the WMATA side learning about how successful this strike has been. Once that happens there is no limit to what we can achieve.

6. Post messages of support online!

It's important that Wiedefeld and the press know that they can't ignore this issue. Make sure that your friends and family know what's happening down in Lorton. Encourage them to write to WMATA customer service.

December 2019

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3 Union Meeting 8 PM	4 Union Meeting 10 AM	5	6	7
8 <small>American Federation of Labor (AFL) founded (1886).</small>	9	10	11	12 Retiree's Christmas Party 11 AM	13	14 Today's Women's Caucus Meeting 10 AM
15	16	17	18	19	20 Executive Board Meeting 9 AM	21 <small>Winter Solstice Montgomery Bus Boycott ends (1956).</small>
22	23	24	25  Christmas Day (Office Closed)	26	27	28
29	30	31				

January 2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
29	30	31 New Year's Eve (Office Closed After 2PM)	1 New Year's Day (Office Closed)	2	3	4
5	6	7 Union Meeting 8 PM	8 Union Meeting 10 AM	9	10	11 Today's Women's Caucus Meeting 10 AM
12	13	14	15 <small>Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. born in Atlanta, Georgia (1929)</small>	16	17 Executive Board Meeting 9 AM	18
19 <small>ATU Local 689 Chartered in 1916. Happy Anniversary Local 689!</small>	20 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday Observed (Office Closed)	21	22	23	24 WMATA Board of Directors Meeting 600 5th Street NW Washington D.C.	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

IMPORTANT UPCOMING EVENTS

ANNUAL SWEETHEART BALL



Saturday, February 8th, 2020 - 7PM to 1:30AM

Held at Martin's Crosswinds

7400 Greenway Center Drive, Greenbelt, MD

Join ATU Local 689 for this black tie affair. It will be an elegant evening of dining, dancing, and live entertainment. Music provided by Frank Sirius & Company Band, with special guest DJ Graham Cracker.

Ticket Sales Schedule - Sold at Union Hall

- Monday, December 16th to Tuesday, December 17th from 10AM to 12PM and 2PM to 4PM tickets available to Local 689 Members Only!
- Wednesday, December 18th to Friday, December 20th from 10AM to 12PM and 2PM to 4PM tickets available to all!

Tickets are \$90 and tables are \$900.

We accept cash and charge (Visa, Mastercard, AMEX)

No checks! No exceptions!

OFFICE CLOSURES

Christmas - Office will be closed on December 24th after 12:00PM and closed all day on December 25th.

New Years - Office will be closed on December 31st after 2:00PM and closed all day on January 1st.

Martin Luther King Day - Office will be closed all day on January 20th.





MEET YOUR EXECUTIVE BOARD



RAYMOND JACKSON
PRESIDENT AND BUSINESS AGENT



KEITH BULLOCK
FINANCIAL SECRETARY TREASURER



BRENDA THOMAS
RECORDING SECRETARY



CARROLL THOMAS
FIRST VICE PRESIDENT



DERRICK MALLARD
SECOND VICE PRESIDENT

BRANDON GODWIN
TRACY SMITH
NIYA BANKS
JAMES GOINES
DION BAKER
OZZIE ANDREWS
JENNIFER CHASE
JOHN GAINES
DERRICK GRAY
RONALD MURRAY
PRINTUS DATES
ALEXIS BOBO
DAMION CANNON
BARRY WILSON
TRACEY BRITT
DIRON JACKSON
ROMOAN BRUCE
DEBRA CARTER
FAYE LAWSON
RONALD SHELTON
GREG BOWEN
TROY BARNES
LEAH ANDERSON

A photograph of a protest. In the foreground, a man in a grey and white striped t-shirt is speaking into a microphone, with his right arm raised. To his left, a woman in a light blue button-down shirt is looking towards the camera. In the background, several people are holding signs that say "ATU ON STRIKE". A large, multi-story brick building is visible in the background under a clear blue sky.

**WE'RE IN THE FIGHT OF OUR LIVES!
NO ONE CAN STAND ON THE
SIDELINES!**

**TOGETHER WE FIGHT!
TOGETHER WE WIN!**