

INSIGHT ON LABOR TALKS

- **Lipsky Sees 'Window of Opportunity' in Latest Strike Developments**



ALLAN LIPSKY

By ALLAN LIPSKY, Chief Operating Officer (Oct. 3) There were very dramatic developments, Monday, in the MTA's labor situation - developments that may well give impetus to a settlement of the strike that has crippled bus and train service for the past 17 days.

In the late afternoon, ATU President Neil Silver announced that he was asking his members to go back to work beginning Tuesday. Oran McMichael, regional director of AFSCME, which represents operations supervisors, joined him in that request.

Silver described the return to work as a seven-day cooling-off period. He made it plain that if there was no satisfactory agreement on a contract during that period, he would reserve the right to call a strike next week.

In response to the announcement by the ATU and AFSCME leaders, James Williams of the UTU issued a very strong statement criticizing the union leaders for not maintaining their solidarity.

Although this was an unexpected turn of events in a long and contentious bargaining process, it may represent a window of opportunity for the MTA to make a deal with all three of unions. Bargaining with the UTU will continue today, led by our Director of Labor Relations, Brenda Diederichs.

Williams has scheduled a meeting, Wednesday, with his full union membership. We're hopeful that he will present to his members the many attractive proposals we've made to the UTU in recent days.

CEO Julian Burke issued a statement, Tuesday morning, in which he described this as a difficult time for the MTA. He noted that "events of the past several weeks have taken an economic and emotional toll on the entire MTA family."

I want to echo the CEO's statement and emphasize that we need to look beyond the strike toward a time when we can come together again as an organization. This will remain at the forefront of our considerations as we proceed through the rest of the negotiations.

On a personal note, I'm well aware of how hard non-represented employees have been working. Everyone should know that both Julian and I very much appreciate the commitment employees are showing. I wish we could thank everyone personally.

In the meantime, all we can do is to ask everyone to stick with it. We'll bring these negotiations to a conclusion and reach a contract settlement as quickly as possible.

[Back to Viewpoint Articles](#)