

STRIKING OPERATORS SAY 'NO' TO COOLING-OFF PERIOD

- **New MTA Offer 'Breaks New Ground,' Burke Says**

**READ CEO
Burke's
statement.**

(Oct. 4) Striking bus operators responded with an overwhelming, "NO," Wednesday morning, when UTU chief James Williams asked whether they wanted to return to work during a five-day cooling-off period. Governor Gray Davis had asked the operators to return to work while contract negotiations continue.

Operators interviewed by media outside the auditorium were unanimous in rejecting the suggestion, saying they would not return to work without a contract.

Mechanics and operations supervisors had been ordered back to work, Monday, by ATU and AFSCME union leaders - a move that drew protests from their union members, as well as from leaders and members of other unions. On Wednesday, some 80 AFSCME members and 10 ATU members reported to work.

Meanwhile at the Pasadena Hilton, MTA negotiators believe they're making progress toward a contract agreement with the UTU.

MTA offer breaks 'new ground'

In a statement released Wednesday afternoon, CEO Julian Burke said the MTA had made a contract offer to the UTU, Tuesday, that "broke new ground and included significant improvements in employees' current pension contributions... We think that if the drivers had been given an opportunity to consider this offer, they would have returned to work."

UTU leaders said Tuesday evening they would be back at the bargaining table, today, with a proposal to end the strike.

Negotiations also are expected, today, between the MTA and ATU.

A wild card thrown into the labor mix within the past 24 hours was a possible strike by some 100 mechanics who service Metrolink trains.

The mechanics recently joined the Teamsters union and now are seeking a contract with Bombadier, the Canadian company that maintains Metrolink trains. The mechanics, who took a strike vote, Sept. 29, are seeking strike sanctions from the Los Angeles and Orange county labor federations, similar to one granted earlier to the UTU.

As the strike headed toward the end of its 19th day, transit companies under contract to the MTA continued to provide service on a handful of bus lines in the South Bay and in the San Fernando Valley. MTA contractors also provided Metrolink shuttle service from Union Station to subway stations as far west as Hollywood.

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