

# The Chief

Civil Service LEADER  
THE CIVIL EMPLOYEES' WEEKLY

March 27, 2009

## Toussaint Pulling Strings

A man named John McMullen once explained selling his share of the New York Yankees by saying that there was "nothing more limited than being a limited partner" of George Steinbrenner's.

By the same token, it appears that nothing defines the word "acting" like being acting president of a union run by Roger Toussaint.

Earlier this year, Curtis Tate was named the acting head of Transport Workers Union Local 100 at the same time that Mr. Toussaint announced that he would not seek a fourth term in office because he was taking a top position at the international union, TWU of America. As the union described it, Mr. Toussaint was dialing back his duties at the local, focusing primarily on its wage contract arbitration, with Mr. Tate to take over the day-to-day operations.

The timing of such transitions is usually aimed at helping the election chances of the man stepping up by giving him a chance to show his leadership abilities and get union members used to him being in charge. That way, when they cast their ballots, they are thinking of him as the incumbent.

From outside Local 100, however, it's hard to see what, if anything, Mr. Tate is doing to mark himself as the new guy in charge. Instead, the local seems to be redolent with the blasts of stale air we've come to expect from Mr. Toussaint.

The prime example came a few weeks ago after the Local 100 board voted to ban Peter Rosconi from serving as the Westchester vice chair for the union's Private Lines Division because he was allegedly delinquent on dues payments.

Mr. Rosconi denies being in arrears, and his claim is supported by a staff representative of the Local 100 unit tapped to monitor dues payments, who notified the board three months ago that any late payments coming from Mr. Rosconi's depot were the result of the unit being behind in its collection efforts.

It's hardly the first time that an internal critic of Mr. Toussaint has been deemed ineligible to either hold union office or run for it because of questionable claims of dues delinquency. The Local 100 president, whose miscalculations started with the 2005

transit strike and continued with the manner in which he contested the revocation of automatic dues collection rights that resulted, has used the chaos that ensued like a club against his opponents.

It was he, not Mr. Tate, who contacted Metropolitan Transportation Authority Bus officials earlier this month directing them that Mr. Rosconi did not represent the union. This would seem to us like the kind of chore someone placed in charge of the "dayto day" operation of the union would perform.

Nor has Mr. Tate been responding to phone calls from this newspaper's transit reporter, Ari Paul. That is a continuation of a stance taken by Mr. Toussaint for nearly two years because he was unhappy about some of the letters we were publishing from his critics. One might think that Mr. Tate, looking to establish his own identity, would be talking to a newspaper that covers the union more extensively than any other publication.

And so it's hard not to conclude that Mr. Tate has simply gotten a loftier title, at a presumably loftier salary, for having a less-grating personality than Mr. Toussaint's, but has not even been given enough responsibility to credibly pass for a front man. Unless that changes, his campaign theme song might as well be that '60s classic from James and Bobby Purify, "I'm Your Puppet."