



Teamsters Local 399

NewsReel

Motion Picture & Theatrical Division

Secretary-Treasurer Leo T. Reed

www.ht399.org

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Message from the Secretary-Treasurer

By Leo T. Reed

Medical and Pension Benefits A High Priority In Motion Picture Negotiations

In mid-March, two days before negotiations began, a member came to the Union Hall to emphasize what has become obvious: when negotiating a new contract your highest priority is to preserve the quality of medical and pension benefits.

In the last two years the member had a spinal fusion, kidney stones, and a host of related ailments that accompany these painful procedures. Fortunately, the payments weren't painful, he said, because he was fortunate to have the quality Motion Picture Industry Health and Pension Plan, long known as the "Cadillac of benefit plans."

His plea to protect our benefits resonated in responses to the questionnaires we sent asking members to prioritize the issues in the 2012 negotiations. Of the 1,001 received, an overwhelming number of members topped their wish list with maintenance of health benefits. The second choice was the protection of pension benefits.

Our town hall meeting, reported in this issue, evoked a similar response. After a presentation by the Executive Administrative Director of the Motion Picture Industry Pension and Health Plan, member after member went up to the mike to stress the importance of these benefits. Their remarks were consistent: medical and pension benefits must be protected.

Since then negotiations have begun for the motion picture industry contract that will cover more than 4,000 studio drivers, 45,000 IATSE members, and about 2,500 members of the basic crafts. Negotiations are never easy, but this one will be especially challenging. Premium costs are rising 9% to 10% per year; we have an aging population; income to the plan is not meeting projections; and it will cost millions of dollars to fund the current level of benefits.

However, there are many options that we will present at the negotiating table. My message to the members is simply: stay calm, have faith, and we will prevail. Members alone don't have the responsibility for maintaining the plan --management also shares in this maintenance of the quality of our benefits.

Although medical and pension benefits will dominate the talks, there are other extremely important issues we must address. Teamster jobs must be protected, work sites must remain safe, and contract language that we won in the past must be preserved.

One of the few things we agree upon in the early sessions is that the talks remain confidential. Both management and the union want to confine the talks to the bargaining table. When there is something to announce – a settlement or a stalemate – we will do so in a transparent and responsible manner. Of course, this doesn't stop the rumor mill, well known in our industry. Please trust only the information that comes from your Business Agents or me.

Thank you for your attention and the faith you have shown in your union negotiators. We are working hard on your behalf.



Town Hall Meeting: Pension, Health and Welfare Plans

Underscoring the importance and concern over medical and pension benefits, more than 300 members attended the first-ever town hall meeting solely focused on these important subjects.

Called by Secretary-Treasurer Leo T. Reed, the January 22nd meeting discussed the status of pension and medical benefits and the upcoming negotiations. The studio drivers contract is scheduled for negotiations this spring and medical benefits is expected to be a major item.

"It has been the hallmark of my adminis-

tration to preserve and enhance your pension and health plans," said Reed in opening the special meeting. "We are now facing our biggest challenge but I promise you we will do everything within our power to maintain the best health plan in the land."

medical plan that is experiencing a shortfall, according to David B. Wescoe, Executive Administrative Director of the Motion Picture Industry Pension and Health Plan, who followed Secretary-Treasurer Reed to the podium. In a power point presentation he demonstrated that medical expenses have risen at an annual nine to ten percent rate and that income is down. The plan suffered significant losses of over \$1 billion in the 2008 market crash. He reported that residuals — a significant source of funding the pension and medical plan — are flat and DVD sales are



down.

It is projected that it will cost millions more to fund the current level of benefits for the three-year period from 2013 to 2015.

A wide variety of negotiating options were outlined by Secretary-Treasurer Reed. Reed made it clear that whatever is decided will have to be negotiated. "We cannot forget that it is not just us." Other unions are also part of the talks

The pension plan is secure and it is the

Continued next page

and, he stressed, “We must also convince them to stay together.” More than 120,000 members, dependents and retirees are covered by the plan. They include Teamsters, IATSE, and the Basic Crafts.

The large number of members who rose to speak demonstrates their great concern for these important benefits. Most thought the highest priority was to maintain the high quality health care plan.







TEAMSTERS LOCAL 399 HOLLYWOOD

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Motion Picture Industry Health Plans

Health Info

Plan Office Address:
11365 Ventura Boulevard
Studio City, CA 91604-9161

Phone: (818) or (310) 769-0007
Phone: (888) 369-2007 (Toll Free Outside So. California)
Fax: (818) 508-4714

Mailing Address:
P.O. Box 1999
Studio City, CA 91614-0999

Questions on Billing/Claime Please Contact:
(818) 769-0007 Ext. 106

Questions on the Eligibility, MEDCO or Coordination of Benefits Please Contact:
(818) 769-0007 Ext. 263

Website:
www.mpihp.org

Health Centers:

Bob Hope Health Center
335 N. LaBrea Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90036
Phone: (323)634-3850
Weekdays: 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Jack H. Skirball Health Center
23366 Mulholland Drive
Woodland Hills, CA 91364
Phone: (818)876-1050
Weekdays: 8:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m.
Saturdays, Sundays and Holidays: 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

North Valley Health Center
Located on the Campus of Providence Holy Cross Hospital
11550 Indian Hills Road, Suite 200

Santa Clarita Health Center
25751 McBoen Parkway, Suite 210
Valencia, CA 91355
Phone: (881)284-3100
Weekdays: 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Saturdays: 8:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Toluca Lake Health Center
4323 Riverside Drive
Burbank, CA 91505
Phone: (818)556-2700
Weekdays: 7:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.
Saturdays: 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Westside Health Center
1950 Sawtelle Boulevard, Suite 130



At a Motion Picture Division meeting in December 2011 representatives from throughout the nation voiced their unity and support for Local 399 in contract negotiations.

A DAY AT 'THE OFFICE' FOR LOCAL 399 DRIVERS

For the hard-working studio drivers of Local 399, a typical day on the job is nothing like a day at "The Office," the TV sitcom on which they work. Instead of telling jokes by the water cooler all day like "The Office" main character Michael Scott and his coworkers, this crew of studio drivers starts the day early, works very efficiently – and when needed, stays late.

"It's always nice to visit a busy set," said



Mike Guzman, Craig Alexander, Don St. John, Stephen Schoenhofen, Kevin Kahl, Marco A. Orozco

Business Agent Leo Reed, Jr. "I know how important jobs are, and this is a crew that takes charge and gets the job done very well, very quickly and most important, very smoothly."

Teamster studio drivers play a key role in production by moving cast, crew, camera trucks, equipment, props, costumes, cast trailers and more to and from the set. They also help prepare for the shoot.

"This is a great example of what it takes to get the job done well. There's a perfect balance of labor to meet the demands of the show. There is no wait to set up trailers and equipment, and therefore, no delay in production," Reed said. "Otherwise, filming would take a lot longer. Even one minute of lost production time can be a huge expense. Our members make sure the process



Lynda Cipperley, Pete Sebring, Doreen Carpenter

runs on time."

There are six regular drivers for "The Office," but often the show's on-location shoots require a lot more. It can take from 20 to 40 drivers per shoot to ensure everything is done right. With 16 main talent actors, that's a lot of cast trailers to start, plus all the extras, equipment and more.

"Local 399 members keep a positive attitude, and it's great to work with them," said Stephen Schoenhofen, Transportation Captain, who has 14 years of experience. "This is a hard-working group and it's apparent they enjoy their jobs."

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Don St. John, Jose 'LITTLE JOE' Reynoso, Bobby Torres, Gary Dally, Stephen Schoenhofen, Leo Reed, Jr.

A DAY AT 'THE OFFICE' FOR LOCAL 399 DRIVERS

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Set-up can start as early as 4:30 am. "It's like setting up a stage, but our stage is wherever the script takes us – from a shopping mall to a company picnic scene," Schoenhofen said. "I'm proud of my drivers. Our Teamsters are reliable."

While characters on "The Office" might get bored with their daily routine sitting by the photocopier with nothing to do, Transportation Coordinator Jesse Dutchover said there's never a dull moment for him. Like all Local 399 members, he can work a 12-hour or 18-hour day. "What I like most about my job is the constant change. You come to work, start a project, finish it quickly, then change it around again for the next shoot. Whether it's the location or the vehicles, you go with the flow."

Because these Teamsters are professional drivers, they handle anything with wheels -- even if that means safely driving a vehicle in a scene. One time, Transportation Co-Captain Don St. John got to appear as an extra in an episode.

"When the characters leave for Florida, the airport van picks them up at Dunder Mifflin. I load their luggage into the van and drive away," he said. "One of the greatest things about this job is that you never know what's going to come. You roll with it, and you have an exciting day."



Gary Dally, Bobby Torres, Jose Reynoso



Tom Oberlin



Burt Tuell and Gary Dally

A DAY AT 'THE OFFICE' FOR LOCAL 399 DRIVERS



Dave Calaway



Carlos De La Torre and Paul Kowalczyk



Craig Alexander, Marco A. Orozco, Don St. John, Stephen Schoenhofen



Kevin Kahl



Alan Wykoff, Richard Anton



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www.ht399.org**

Omega Cinema Props



Brandon Furuya (photo dept), Valente Lamas (shop steward), Janet Rivas (office mgr), Edgar Vasquez and Herbert Duran from CP One

Need a fluffy pink pillow, a hollow tree trunk and a gun-metal gray table lamp by 6 a.m. tomorrow morning? Look no further than Omega Cinema Props.

As Shop Steward Valente Lamas says, "The Teamsters of Local 399 get the job done. We're dedicated."

Lamas credits Teamsters Local 399 for their negotiations which resulted in some of the best benefits around. "We really have one of the best. It is good! We've got dental and vision, all the great things that were negotiated through the union last year."



Omega Cinema Props Two

Omega Cinema Props consists of four buildings, each containing different types of props. "We have furniture, linens, everything from all over the world," Lamas said. There are entire buildings housing, among many other things, pieces of restaurants and stores, patio furniture and garden accessories, TVs and other electronics. It's no surprise to learn that Omega offers one of the greatest variety of props in the entertainment business.

It's part of what makes the job so exciting for Teamsters like Lamas. "When I first came here, I had no prop experience. It was like, 'Wow, all this goes in the movies!' It's a fun place to work," said Lamas, who has been with the company for almost 25 years. "It's never the same old boring thing, it's always different."



Santiago Castillo-21 years and Quinn Brayton- 7 yrs - Linens Dept

Santiago Castillo, who works in the Linens Department and has been at Omega for 21 years, agreed with Lamas. "I like what I do, it's a great place to be," he said. "It takes imagination to work in this industry."

With often complicated and last-minute orders to fill, the Omega Teamsters are successful because they have a solid knowledge of their products. "We really need to know what we carry, so I'm aware of every prop we have."

Lamas added, "You have to know lots of details about so many different things." That knowledge, of course, is a valuable resource for employers who strive to give their clients what they need on time, all the time.

Lamas has been Shop Steward off and on

Omega Cinema Props

at Omega for more than half of his time with the company. It's a position he is happy to hold, and his experience gives him the ability to handle almost any situation that comes up. "It's really rewarding. I like being able to help people every day."

Like many of his coworkers, Lamas says he feels a sense of pride when he sees his props on the Big Screen. "When we go to the movies it's great. I took my nieces to watch 'Hotel For Dogs.' The dogs were sitting on our chairs, eating on our tables. That was fun to see."

The 54 Omega Teamsters are a close-knit group. That means that when someone needs to go pick up the kids at 5, he doesn't have to worry — his coworkers will stick around and finish the job. "We have a lot of people with kids. Some of the kids I met when they were little and now 20 years later they're adults. We have a good core here and like I said, we get it done."



Oscar Alvarez- Driver- 21 years



Herbert Gonzalez and Valente Lamas at Omega Cinema Props



President Tony Cousimano and General Manager Barry Pritchard



Salvador Bonilla- 26 years -CP Two- foreman



TJ Scott- customer service 23 years-CP Two



Jorge Velasquez- driver for FOX



Aaron Hemstock- CP Two- 16 years -Customer Service



Winston Reid- CP Three 16 years



TEAMSTERS LOCAL 399

Studio Transportation Drivers
4747 Vineland Avenue, Suite E
North Hollywood, CA 91602

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Herbert Duran, 27 years - CP Three



Jorge Balcaceres- 27 yrs., Humberto Acuña 15 yrs., Ernest Cook 21 yrs., Russell Williams 15 yrs. - Omega CP Four



The Omega Cinema Props Office Staff