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**TEAMSTERS  
ONLINE**
[HOME](#) [ABOUT IBT](#) [PRESIDENT HOFFA](#) [SEC-TREASURER KEEGEL](#) [SEARCH](#) [JOIN IBT](#) [DIVISIONS](#) [DEPARTMENTS](#)
[Teamster Home](#) > [Communications](#) > [Teamster Magazine](#) > [January/February 2001](#)


## Teamster Magazine January/February 2001

Table of Contents

[Department  
Services](#)

[About our  
Publications](#)

[Teamster  
Magazine Back  
Issues](#)

[Teamster  
Leader Back  
Issues](#)

[Media Guide](#)

[Media Kit](#)

[Press Contact  
Info](#)

- [Detroit Casino Workers Win High-Stakes](#)

**Game** When Detroit voters agreed in 1996 to host casino gambling in their city, Teamsters Local 372 joined with Operating Engineers Local 547, the UAW and the Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees to create the Detroit Union Council. Representing some 4,200 workers, the Council presented a united front to management and declared, "It can't happen here." >>>

- [Battle Against Overnite Heats Up](#)

Teamsters engaged in the yearlong strike against Overnite Transportation will take a new tack this winter -- this one aimed directly at the company's best customers. >>>

- [Chicago Locals Foil Outsourcing Scheme](#)

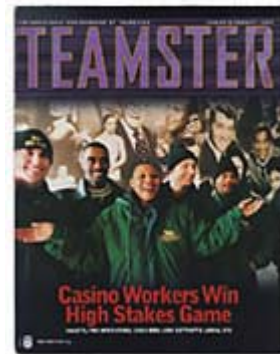
- [International Holds First Ever CPA Conference](#)

- [Organizing in Las Vegas](#)

- [Hospital Workers Vote Teamster](#)

- [Florida Fuel Drivers Organize](#)

- [Local 705's Dean Serna Turns Tragedy Into Triumph](#)



## Detroit Casino Workers Win High-Stakes Game

### It's in the Cards

The gaming industry is among the most profitable and rapidly-expanding economic sectors in America. Yet many casinos are not content to profit from their patrons' losses. They squeeze out even greater margins on the backs of their workers.

When Detroit voters agreed in 1996 to host casino gambling in their city, Teamsters Local 372 joined with Operating Engineers Local 547, the UAW and the Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees to create the Detroit Union Council. Representing some 4,200 workers the Council presented a united front to management and declared, "It can't happen here."

The result: Rapid organization at two of the city's three casinos, and a strong agreement for Teamster workers.

"In the end, we all stood together and came out with a decent contract," said Marlene Norris, a PBX operator at Motor City Casino. "I'm especially happy with the insurance co-pay, the personal days off, the 401k plan and bereavement pay." A member of the union negotiating committee, Norris said she was "really impressed with the leadership."



### Troubled Youth

One of the biggest hurdles organizers faced was addressing the concerns of newer workers, whose prior experience with unions was limited at best. The Teamsters sought to represent workers in a wide variety of jobs, including gardeners, communications, warehouse, retail store, shuttle bus, coat check and doorman. But the mostly young valet workers, accustomed to depending on tips for their income, proved to be especially challenging.

"They didn't know about the union," said Veronica Stephenson, a Teamster International Representative. "They thought, 'All you do is pay dues; what do I get for my dues?'"

"They didn't even understand seniority. Their bosses could bring in a cousin and fire them. But when they saw people getting terminated over and over, they realized that time on the job means something." Stephenson who sought out workers where they ate,

was a familiar sight in the cafeteria, talking union one-on-one to build their trust.

"A lot of younger guys in my department were not looking at the long term," added Antonio Andrews, a valet attendant at MGM Grand Casino. "They were getting a lot of negative feedback from the supervisors."

During negotiations, Andrews was terminated for his union activities. "But the union stepped up, came to bat, and I was back inside of a week," he said. "Then I could go to the younger workers and say, 'You see what I'm talking about, you see what I mean?'" His reinstatement was an in-your-face example of both the need for and the power of the union that the other valets took seriously.

### **A Strong Hand**

Union strength convinced the companies to sign a neutrality agreement allowing for card-check recognition. For the 133 Teamsters at MGM, the margin of victory was 2-1. At Motor City, with 117 Teamsters, the vote was more than 3-1.

These results gave the negotiating committee a strong hand going into the bargaining sessions-but not without risk.

"There were long hours of negotiating," remembered Andrews. "It's tough to stay focused early in the morning when everyone's sleepy. But that's when you have to remain focused, because that's when they try to slip a whammy in on you."

Yet being part of a union's formation, battle and victory can be a lesson in solidarity. "This was a good experience for me," said Damon Kimble, a worker in Motor City's Warehouse Department and a fellow negotiator. "People have been honest, and that's real important to me. I'm happy we can be honest and help each other." Kimble saw great value in the contacts he made with members of other unions. "You never know when you might need someone."

"It's good to work on behalf of the whole," added Andrews. "These are beliefs that will carry you through the rest of your life."

### **A Good Deal**

All that hard work yielded a strong agreement.

"The contract was beneficial for the union employees," said Les Holmes, the head valet at Motor City. "It's forming consistency in my department that did not exist very much prior to the contract. And it's forcing management to be fair to everyone and preventing biased decisions casino-wide. People are pleased that they can't be fired or reprimanded for unfair reasons."

The agreement established immediate wage parity between the two casinos, with general wage increases for each of the three years. Additionally, the pact made significant improvements in health insurance premiums and co-pays, paid time off, job security and advancement opportunities.

"The bid language and promotion language is very strong," noted Al Derey, Secretary-Treasurer of Local Union 372. "The companies are much less likely to deal with our members as at-will employees, and they can move into better jobs."

"If they get reprimanded, they can file a grievance," said Holmes. "Everyone's pretty happy about that."

### **All that Glitters is not Gold**

During the past decade, casinos have expanded from Las Vegas and Atlantic City to 28 states. In 1998, Americans spent about \$50 billion on gambling-more than on movies, sports, theme parks, video games and recorded music combined, according to a report by the National Gambling Impact Study Commission.

Both workers and management are making a long-term commitment to creating good jobs and revitalizing downtown Detroit-as well as stemming the flow of U.S. dollars to a casino facing the city from across the Detroit River in Windsor, Ontario. The casinos are currently housed at temporary quarters-at a cost of \$210 million for MGM in a former Internal Revenue Service building, and \$160 million for Motor City in a retired Wonder Bread building.

But eventually they will be moved to permanent hotel/casino/entertainment complexes on the city's riverfront. The estimated tab for each of the final structures ranges from \$600 million to over \$1 billion.

Amid all the glitter, it's easy for employees to get overlooked. Workers at the Detroit casinos are learning that a collective bargaining agreement is a living document-a tool for solving everyday workplace issues.

"People are looking at the whole contract and starting to use it," said Kimble. "It's got steps and procedures you can use."

Norris said that members, who discovered that the pre-union management-dominated worker councils were a "farce," have growing respect for the contract. "I tell them a thousand dollars an hour more is no good if you don't have job security."

"Members are happy to see union representation," said Derey. "We're moving forward."

"I'm looking forward to bargaining again in 2003," added Norris.

[back to the top](#)

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## **In the cold of winter**

## Battle against Overnite heats up

Teamsters engaged in the yearlong strike against Overnite Transportation will take a new tack this winter – this one aimed directly at the company's best customers.

Local unions will transfer their attention from pickets at Overnite terminal gates and ambulatory pickets. Instead, they will begin informational handbilling or organizational leafleting at the sites of Overnite's highest profile customers – a strategy already underway in Atlanta, Georgia; Memphis, Tennessee; and St. Louis, Missouri.

"The last thing Overnite wants is to see local union members informing its customers about its abuses of the law and employees," said John Murphy, Teamster Organizing Director and International Vice President. "So that's exactly what we will do – without ceasing."

### Renewed Vigor

During a late-November meeting in Chicago, representatives of Teamster local unions gathered to lay out the plan and emphasize the union's successes in the battle so far.

Murphy and Freight Director Phil Young, both International vice presidents, told the attendees that Overnite has continued to lose volume throughout the dispute, despite the company's assertions that its business was improving.

"Overnite is still trying to get back to where they were in the third quarter of 1999," Murphy said.

A renewed campaign of informational leafleting that describes the company's abuses of its employees and its unlawful labor practices will force Overnite customers to reconsider their relationships with the Union Pacific subsidiary, Young said.

And Overnite needs to learn that the Teamsters won't abandon the fight, Murphy said.

"This union is committed to this thing to the end," he said. "We've been on strike 13 months. If it takes 13 years, that's how long it's going to be. We will never walk away from this."

[back to the top](#)

## Chicagoland Unity Locals Foil Outsourcing Scheme

Bakery drivers. Produce drivers. Dairy drivers. Meat drivers. Freight drivers. They were 170 Teamsters in all, members of five different locals, with management looking to take their work away.

When Certified Grocers threatened to outsource deliveries from its Midwest distribution center outside Chicago, management learned a lesson in Teamster solidarity they'll not soon forget. Teamsters take care of their own.

Certified Grocers claimed there was no way to bring its distribution system into the 21st century without a third-party contractor.

"Hell no," the Teamsters responded. "That's Teamster work, those are Teamster jobs and we're keeping them."

Officers, business agents and stewards of the five Locals -- 703, 705, 710, 734 and 754, hammered out a combined route agreement that preserved all 170 jobs and the Teamster contracts that had covered them.

"My brothers really stood together," said John Thomas, Local 754 Secretary-Treasurer who chaired the negotiating committee. "There were some complicated issues, but none we couldn't resolve fairly. These guys spent hundreds of hours on this agreement and their dedication shows. It makes you proud to know things like unity and strength aren't just words."

[back to the top](#)

## International holds first ever CPA Conference Taking Account

What do you get when you pack more than 600 Teamster accountants, auditors and office managers in one room? One of the most well-attended, well-received conferences in the union's history.

"This meeting was long overdue. As an International we are committed to bringing information to the locals and joint councils. We are here to serve you, so you can better serve our great union," said C. Thomas Keegel, Teamsters General Secretary-Treasurer. "When it comes to finances, the Teamsters must be the most progressive and most diligent union in the world. And this conference was a great opportunity for our financial workers to improve their skills".

The first Teamsters CPA Conference was held October 23-26 in Las Vegas. Nearly



600 Teamsters came together to hear speakers and attend workshops on correct financial and accounting procedures. Attendees were treated to speakers and workshops that addressed:

- \* Titan IV, the International's newest accounting and communications tool
- \* Quick Books
- \* An overview and discussion of the Department of Labor's Office of Labor-Management Services and the LMRDA
- \* Project RISE
- \* PAC reporting requirements
- \* Beck Audits
- \* Bonding and Insurance requirements
- \* Auditor Communications.

[back to the top](#)

## Union City Organizing in Las Vegas

In 1997, the AFL-CIO designated Las Vegas a "Union City" because the Labor Movement there has made great strides in organizing the unorganized. One in five Nevada workers belongs to a union. It's the seventh most unionized state in the U.S. Teamster organizing is a big reason why.

"I've got an election scheduled this week and another next week," said Ray Isner, Director of Organizing at Las Vegas Local Union 631. "Just our local has sixteen campaigns running right now. We'll be going at this rate for years without exhausting the opportunities."



### Every Member an Organizer

When Las Vegas Local 995 Secretary- Treasurer Mike Magnani looked at his latest organizing tip sheet, he had to do a double take. It was from General President James P. Hoffa.

"He'd been in town for a Teamster event and Paul Wieber, a Las Vegas Limousine Service (LVL) driver, asked a member of the General Executive Board about organizing," said Magnani. "Jim Hoffa was making sure the young man's request was being followed up."

As it turned out, Local 995 had also been talking with another LVL driver, Daryl DeShaw.

"We worked with Rob Rovere and Jason Gately, at Local 995," said DeShaw. "I headed the committee on the night shift and Paul did the same with the day drivers. Rob and Jason were great, Paul was great, and the response we got from our co-workers was amazing."

Within five days, they'd gathered more than 200 signed union cards.

Six weeks later, they'd won an election, 182-4 and Local 995 had more than 300 new members.

"The company was flabbergasted by the vote," said DeShaw. "But we were confident all along."

Next come negotiations for the drivers' first contract.

"These men and women work hard and provide superior service," said Magnani.

"They deserve the wages, benefits and job security that come with a Teamster contract. Right now they have no pension, no health and welfare, no nothing. We will change that."

### Teamster Unity

One great organizing tool deployed in the LVL campaign was a visit by Teamster Local and Joint Council trucks from all over the country. The LVL drive took place at the same time as the Teamster Unity Conference in Las Vegas. Besides the union leaders who attended the Conference, there was a convoy of all Teamster trucks.

They paid a visit to the staging area at the Mc Carran Airport to offer support.

"The guys just went wild," said DeShaw. "We were shouting and whooping and blowing our horns. It was a definite high point and I'm sure it won over a few votes from the waverers."

[back to the top](#)

## Jeffersonian Democracy Hospital Workers Vote Teamster

The 699 new Teamsters of Jefferson Hospital take democracy every bit as seriously as their hospital's namesake did. Nearly every member made his voice heard in the

debate about whether to organize. It was a campaign of the workers, by the workers and for the workers.

Jefferson activists were spearheading their third organizing drive in 10 years. Management at the Pittsburgh hospital fought unionization tooth-and-nail. But the workers were determined to counter the intimidation tactics with good old-fashioned grass-roots organizing -- one-on-one meetings, small group sessions and mass rallies.

The discussion, debate and dialogue paid off. The workers voted to join Pittsburgh Local 926 by a margin of 330 to 280.

### "They'll Say Anything"

Carol Dithrich is a courier in Jefferson's Environmental Services Department. She has seen her bosses engage in a decade's worth of union-busting trickery.

"It was a total nightmare," said Dithrich. "They walked around the hospital saying there'll be no more pay increases if the union comes in. They stuck flyers in our boxes. They held big meetings. Some of us have been through it before, so we took it all with a grain of salt. But some of the the younger ones got really scared. But we just kept answering management's lies with the truth."

Nursing Assistant Richard Markette worked with Dithrich, co-worker Theda Fuqua and about a dozen others to make sure the voters had the facts before they voted. One tactic was leafleting in front of the hospital, with the Local 926 trucked parked nearby.

"Local 926 was great, every step of the way," said Markette. "Whenever we needed something, [Local 926 Secretary-Treasurer] Charlie Byrnes was there. Having the truck out front. It really made a statement."

"It drove the hospital nuts," said Markette. "They said they were calling the cops. We told them to go ahead. You should have seen their faces when the cops wouldn't help them."

### Thwarting Democracy

Jefferson Hospital officials, continue to oppose the will of the people.

"They've filed a couple of ridiculous challenges to the election," Byrnes said. "We were out front four days before vote, handing out 'smiley face' cards. Theda Fuqua was in the lobby the day of the election. They're calling it intimidation. Smiley faces, for crying out loud. And Theda barely tops five foot tall."

Still, Byrnes expects a long battle.

"They're working with one of the worst union-busting law firms in the state," Byrnes said. "Once they lose the election challenge, they'll appeal. After that, I expect bargaining to be just as bad. It's a crying shame and a real argument for labor law reform. With their deep pockets, they can tie things up for years. But not forever. We can fight just as long and as hard as they can. We can, and we will."

Markette is philosophical. "I guess they'd rather spend that money on legal fees than on us," he said. "But I come from a union family and I grew up here in Pittsburgh. I knew we needed the power of a union. Now we've got it."

[back to the top](#)

## OPERATION TANKER! Florida Fuel Drivers Organize

Operation Tanker's first victory was sweet. Management threw every curveball, spitball and gutterball in their arsenal, but the fuel drivers of Petro-Chemical Transport (PCT) stood firm. They wanted a union and now they have one. They're the newest members of Teamsters Local 79 in Florida.

The men and women who deliver gas to convenience stores and independent gas stations in Florida get a particularly raw deal. Keenan Transport controls the market, either directly or through subsidiaries. PCT was Citgo's sole source supplier until Keenan acquired it. Keenan is aggressively anti-union.

And Florida is a so-called "right-to-work" state. Its law puts barriers in the way of union organizing and its bosses know how to work every angle.

But when Local Union 79 President and Teamster International Vice President Ken Wood and Teamster Tankhaul Division Director Keith Gleason were shown an opportunity among Florida fuel drivers, they seized it. Georgia/ Florida Conference Organizer Bob Maldunas and former Hess driver Brad O'Malley presented them with a blueprint for organizing tanker drivers. Gleason and Wood drummed up the resources.

Operation Tanker! is the result. PCT is its first win. Others are in the cards.



### Vicious Propaganda

PCT tried to intimidate its drivers to keep them from signing up.

"They told us we'd never get a contract, that the union just wanted our money," said Wayne Richardson, a PCT driver who works out of Orlando.

But Operation Tanker! organizers countered every management ploy with hard facts and figures.

"Brad spent a lot of time driving a Hess truck. He knows the other drivers and they know him," said Maldunas. "The bosses' vicious propaganda just doesn't work when we've got the answers, coming from a source the drivers know they can trust."

The tide was running against PCT even before they fired one union sympathizer, and his brother. That bit of overkill was the last straw. PCT's Tampa drivers voted to join Local Union 79 by a 22-15 margin. In the Orlando/Cape Canaveral area the vote was 17-8 to join Local Union 385.

The Teamsters have filed unfair labor practice charges on behalf of the illegally fired brothers.

### Rolling On

As 2000 drew to a close, a third bargaining unit joined up. The drivers at EagleTransport in Cocoa Beach voted 25-13 to become Tankhaul Teamsters.

"We're on a roll, brother," said Maldunas. "We're going to win them all."

Next in Maldunas and O'Malley's sights are more shops in the Keenan operation. The PCT victory clearly has them worried. Keenan managers have been questioning their drivers intensely since the PCT wins.

"Then their drivers come and talk to me and my buddies," reports Richardson. "We just tell them to ignore the nonsense and sign up for the Union. They can see how it worked for us."

[back to the top](#)

## Delivering Hope Local 705's Dean Serna Turns Tragedy Into Triumph

When Dean Serna, a UPS driver at Local 705, heard that a homeless shelter in South Chicago had been robbed of almost its entire supply of food, clothing and toiletries, he could hardly believe it.

"It really upset me when I heard about it. Here are people who don't have anything and someone is going to steal from them," said Serna. "Now that's low."

The lifelong Chicago resident was determined to do something about it. What he didn't know was that a lot of other people were willing to join the fight as well.



### Teamsters Lending a Hand

Southwest Chicago PADS (Public Action to Deliver Shelter) provides overnight emergency shelter, food and available resources to people who are homeless. Often, the shelter simply provides a shower, a warm bed or a can of deodorant to those in need. After the break-in, an act of charity was what PADS itself needed.

Serna made everybody on his route aware of the problem and asked them to help in any way they could. Local 705 was among the first to pitch in with a van full of clothing. He was also given a day off to deliver the items to the Southwest Chicago shelter.

"I was shocked by the response," said Serna of his fellow union members. "When they adopt a cause, they really deliver. I had people coming up to me at the Local handing me personal checks."

According to Serna, the effort started to snowball. Hank Gust and Faith Stachnik at Jewel/Osco, a grocery store on his route, donated food items. A local dentist provided toothpaste and toothbrushes. Kathy Sellers and Margaret Glancy, who work in a doctor's office, chipped in with clothes and shoes. What began as a simple act of caring had transformed into a movement with the Teamsters, 20 corporations and countless individuals on board.

"Dean went over and beyond the call of duty," said Karen Gonzalez, Director of Southwest Chicago PADS. "He gave us everything we needed. Most of all, Dean gave us hope."

### Winning the Fight

Thanks to the response of people like Serna, PADS is now restocked at a greater level than it was before the robbery. Gonzalez says donations have even made it possible for PADS to relocate to a new building. Their current home is slated for demolition on April 1. And Serna has been offered a position on the advocacy's board of directors.

"People are good at heart," said Serna, who, last year, spent a Saturday with some Teamsters helping tornado victims in nearby Plainfield, Illinois. "It was great to see so much from so many."

Serna doesn't consider himself a hero, just someone who cared enough to take action instead of settling for a few idle words on the subject. It is a good example of how one person can inspire others, turning a singular gesture into a collective movement. It is true that unity of action, whether with the Teamsters or in the community, is the essential

ingredient for victory.

[back to the top](#)

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General questions and media requests: [communications@teamster.org](mailto:communications@teamster.org)  
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