A Hard Job: Lessons from SEIU Local 284’s five campaigns to organize Twin City school bus drivers
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Introduction: A path to transnational organizing
In July 2004, the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) in the United States joined with the Transportation and General Workers Union (T&G) in Great Britain to launch a path-breaking multi-union, transnational campaign to organize First Student and Durham bus drivers and create the largest bus drivers union in the United States.

First Student (with 19,000 drivers and 17,400 buses) and Durham School Services (with 9,000 drivers and 8400 buses) are the number two and number three largest private school bus companies in the United States. Laidlaw is the largest. Both First Student and Durham share a Great Britain connection. First Group’s parent company, FirstGroup, is the largest bus company in Great Britain, and Durham’s parent company, National Express Corporation, PLC, is one of Great Britain’s largest bus and ground transport corporations.

Unlike many of their American counterparts, bus drivers in Great Britain enjoy almost universal unionization (nearly 95% union density) with good pay, benefits, and working conditions. Still, transportation union leaders in Great Britain recognize that maintaining their high standards increasingly depends on raising the standards of drivers in the expanding, highly profitable, and a much less unionized U.S. labor market.

The path to building this historic alliance is littered with many attempts to organize on a company by company, or on a regional market by regional market basis. Many of these campaigns ended in defeat. Even those that succeeded faced enormous obstacles at the bargaining table. Minnesota has been at the center of organizing private school bus companies for the past 15 years, and SEIU Local 284 for the past six years. Each campaign ended in defeat. Yet, these defeats, although bitter, also hold important lessons and provide a stark example of the daunting obstacles faced by workers trying to organize transnational corporations through traditional NLRB processes, and through plant by plant, or even local market strategies. SEIU Local 284’s “It’s a real job” campaigns to organize Twin City bus drivers show what a hard
job it is, and forcefully demonstrate the need to fashion new organizing strategies to effectively take on global corporations. This is an analysis of SEIU Local 284’s Minnesota campaigns and how their efforts helped to spark SEIU’s current transnational strategy.

The foundations of the 1999 SEIU campaign

Privatization of school bus services in Minnesota
Since the 1970s, school districts across the United States have turned to subcontracting their food service, custodial and bus transportation services. Although some privatization is clearly driven by ideological opposition to the public sector and publicly provided services, more often the reasons come down to money. Faced with funding cuts and strapped budgets, local school officials turn to the golden hope of privatization and private service provider promises that they can do more for less. For many, if not most privatization schemes, savings come directly from reduced labor costs through lower wages and benefits and a de-unionized workforce.

Minnesota has not been immune to the lure of privatization, and over the past two decades many of the largest school districts in the state have fully or partially privatized their school transportation services. Over a dozen Twin City school districts, including the Minneapolis and St. Paul districts, provide all or significant portions of their pupil transportation through private, non-union vendors.

A history of failed bus driver organizing campaigns
SEIU Local 284 was not the first union to attempt organizing private sector bus drivers. During the 1980s, Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1005, which represents Metro bus drivers, tried to organize Medicine Lakes Lines without success. Medicine Lakes was then the area’s second largest bus operator. In 1991, the United Steelworkers of America (USWA) tried their hand at organizing 300 Medicine Lakes drivers. They went to an NLRB election and lost by 11 votes. They tried again in 1997 and lost a second NLRB election by 32 votes, 143-111.

In between these two elections, the Teamsters (IBT) tried to organize Ryder bus drivers in 1995. The IBT represents the remaining drivers employed by the Minneapolis school district. The Teamsters Ryder campaign also went to an NLRB election and the union lost by an almost 2:1 margin – 502 to 272. They began a second campaign in 1998 but quickly withdrew and never filed for election.

SEIU Local 284 – Minnesota’s largest school bus drivers union
SEIU Local 284 represents 8,000 school district employees in Minnesota, including 700 school bus drivers in 12 Twin City school districts. New leadership in the mid-1990s brought renewed energy for organizing at all levels. Andy Stern became president of SEIU after John Sweeney left to head the AFL-CIO in 1995. Both Stern and Sweeney believed passionately in the need for more, larger and more strategic
organizing campaigns to turn around labor’s fortunes. A year and a half earlier, SEIU Local 284 also changed leadership when members elected Shane Allers Executive Director in November 1993. Allers saw how the lower wages and benefits of non-union school bus drivers undermined the bargaining power of SEIU Local 284’s bus drivers. As he recalled in April 1999, “We decided we had to build some power as a union, not just act like an insurance policy.” Out of these changes came the local’s first attempt to organize the Twin City private school bus market. Their target: Ryder Student Transportation Services.

Picking Ryder as a strategic target
In 1998, Ryder bought up Medicine Lake Lines to become the largest private bus company in the Twin Cities and the largest private provider of student transportation services. Ryder employed 1700 school bus workers with contracts in eleven Twin City school districts. Ryder was by far the dominant private local operator with 39% of the 500 bus routes for the Minneapolis Public Schools and 80% of the buses for the St. Paul Public Schools. The union believed that if they could organize the Ryder workers they could leverage the entire market.

On its face, Ryder’s workforce presented a number of challenges for organizers (Hart, 1999). First, it was a heavily male workforce: about 60% men. And of the men, about a third were older than 60 compared to 9% of the women. Conversely, about a third of the women were younger than 35 compared to 16% of the men. Not surprisingly, Ryder’s male drivers tended to have more seniority than it’s female drivers.

Second, a majority of workers were part-time – 55%. Two groups emerged: one of mostly older white men over age 60 who worked part-time and comprised 16.5% of the total workforce; and second group of younger fulltime workers that comprised 24% of the total workforce. Many of the older workers were retired and driving bus a way to stay active and pick up extra income. The second group of younger fulltime workers had more to gain from organizing, but they also had more to lose if they lost their job.

Many of Ryder school bus employees were low wage workers, traditionally an easier target group to organize. In early 1999, Ryder bus drivers started at about $10 an hour (compared to over $13-14 an hour for unionized school bus drivers). After a year they would earn about $11 an hour. About 57% of all Ryder workers reported an income from their main job of less than $20,000 a year; nearly two-thirds of these workers were part-time – or a third of the total Ryder workforce. Although for many of these workers Ryder was their primary income, many also held one or more other jobs.

On these wages and hours, many workers could not afford to pay for the employer provided health insurance. According to one single mother, the company paid $60 a
month toward her family coverage, while she had to pay $670 a month. Ryder drivers received no paid sick leave, no vacation, and no guaranteed pension plan.

Given the workforce and the employer, SEIU organizers adopted an aggressive, and quick, NLRB election strategy.

**Building and waging a comprehensive campaign**

SEIU Local 284 organizers launched their “It’s a Real Job” campaign in January 1999 and began to build a comprehensive campaign.

**Components of a comprehensive campaign**

Kate Bronfenbrenner and David Hickey identify 10 union building tactics that build successful comprehensive campaigns (*Blueprint for Change*, 2004). These comprehensive campaign elements include:

1. Adequate and appropriate staff and resources.
2. Strategic targeting and research
3. An active and representative rank-and-file organizing committee
4. Active participation of member volunteer organizers
5. Person-to-person contact inside *and* outside the workplace
6. Benchmarks and assessments to monitor campaign progress
7. Issues and a message that resonates in the workplace and community
8. Creative, escalating internal pressure tactics involving workers *inside* the workplace
9. Creative, escalating external pressure tactics involving members *outside* the workplace
10. Building for the first contract before the election

SEIU employed many of these tactics. They were strategic in their target. The local and international union committed a number of dedicated staff and resources, although there were probably fewer staff organizers than necessary to organize such a large number of employees and geographically dispersed. Organizers recruited a strong and representative organizing committee that was both active and visible during the campaign. SEIU used its political connections to bring community pressure to bear on Ryder through letters of support from elected officials and the Minneapolis and St. Paul school boards – two of Ryder’s largest contracts. Both school boards passed resolutions supporting workers “right to organize.” Finally, they surveyed workers about their key issues and made these issues part of the campaign (and contract) demands.

On the other hand, although SEIU did a contact blitz – mostly through the phones with some house visits – it had most of its contact with workers at or on the way to their worksites. Organizers, especially rank-and-file workers on the organizing committee, could have done more (or more effective and repetitive) home visits, especially to identified swing voters. Overall, member-to-member organizing was
much less than would be necessary to overcome an aggressive employer anti-union campaign. There appeared to be no well-developed written plan with clear benchmarks and timelines; perhaps such a plan, if it indeed did not exist, could have helped to frame and time the campaign to escalate internal and external pressure. For example, the St. Paul and Minneapolis school district resolutions (a good preemptive tactic) passed well into the campaign, and long after the employer had begun their anti-union campaign. Despite a few letters from elected officials and the two board resolutions, the local never effectively built strong and lasting community alliances with teachers and other unions representing school workers, and with parent and other community groups interested in the schools. Without such alliances, SEIU never secured more than gestures of solidarity from community allies, and certainly not the pressure necessary to disrupt Ryder’s operations or seriously threaten its economic bottom-line.

Still, within a few months, organizers had signed authorization cards from 50-60% of Ryder’s 1700 workers, and on April 15, 1999, President Stern joined Shane Allers, SEIU organizers and the Ryder employee organizing committee to file for the largest NLRB election in Minnesota for decades.

**Key union campaign tactics**
The union used a variety of tactics to build internal solidarity and counter the employer’s anti-union campaign.

- **Worksite leaflets.** The union began leafleting workers fairly early in the campaign. These leaflets were largely informational and informed workers of the NLRB election process and their rights to decide free from employer threat or intimidation. Several described SEIU’s dues structure. Still other leaflets meant to agitate, like one titled “What about Bruce?” This leaflet encouraged workers to ask Regional Manager Bruce Dischinger to disclose his salary and benefits at company-run anti-union “town hall” meetings. Organizers also sent at least one letter to all employees, but mostly organizers relied on leafleting workers as the arrived or left the worksite.

- **Bus Driver News newsletter.** SEIU organizers and the organizing committee published the first organizing committee newsletter – the *Bus Driver News* – at the end of March; by April the name had changed to the *Bus Stop News*. In all, the committee published four newsletters ranging from 4 to 12 pages long and filled with rank-and-file testimonials, letters of support from community members and elected officials, worker photos, cartoons and art work, and updates on the NLRB election and basic information about SEIU. These newsletters were engaging and often had a grade school like “zine” feel to them.
• **Bargaining issue survey.** Relatively early in the campaign, SEIU organizers distributed a bargaining survey which asked workers “to voice your opinions on the issues that concern you most.” Included in the survey was a form for those interested in helping the union organize. SEIU tallied the results of these surveys and published the top issues in a leaflet. The survey’s purpose was fourfold: (1) to determine the key issues in the workplace – although most good organizers get a good sense of these very early in a campaign; (2) to build worker commitment and solidarity; (3) to reinforce that organizing a union is the path to a good contract; and (4) to secure updated contact information on workers and assess their commitment to the union.

• **Phone calls.** Early in the campaign, SEIU paid staff organizers made cold calls to Ryder employees. The callers asked workers to support the SEIU “Bus Driver Dignity Campaign” – a legislative effort to win increased transportation funding to improve wages and benefits for drivers. Depending on the reaction to this first question, organizers moved the conversation to workplace issues and the worker’s previous experience with unions, if any. Off these calls they made an initial assessment of support and asked for a follow-up meeting.

• **Right to Organize resolutions.** SEIU did not spend much time building alliances outside of other labor unions. Their principal backing came from the St. Paul Trades and Labor Assembly and the Minneapolis Central Labor Council. With this support the Minneapolis and St. Paul school boards passed a resolution supporting the right of workers to organize and asking all district contractors to “communicate to their employees that the employer is neutral on the choice of the employees.” The resolution also asked contractors “to provide their employees the opportunity to choose whether to unionize or not free from intimidation or coercion” through an alternative card-check recognition election process. The boards passed and sent this resolution to Ryder in mid-March, but without any enforcement teeth (e.g. the ability to deny the contract or take the work elsewhere), the resolutions provided little more than moral suasion.

**Ryder fights back**

Ryder started its anti-union campaign almost immediately after SEIU first began contacting workers. They hired an anti-union consultant and employed virtually every tactic in the union-avoidance repertoire: anti-union letters and leaflets mailed to employees and (not so subtly) included with employee paychecks; anti-union workplace posters and banners; employee surveillance and interrogation; mandatory anti-union “captive audience” meetings; one-on-one meetings with supervisors; an “independent” employee anti-union committee; verbal promises (or threats) that organizing would be futile; firing union organizers; and an almost nonstop assault on the SEIU’s motives and methods. It is impossible to know how much this anti-union
campaign cost Ryder, but based on other employer anti-union consultant campaigns it certainly ran into the many tens of thousands of dollars and more likely into the hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Over the course of the 12 week public campaign, Ryder produced at least 11 letters/leaflets/workplace posters urging its employees to reject the union. They held numerous captive audience “town hall” meetings to explain their view on unions, and conducted many more informal and less structured “meetings” with wavering employees. Management even offered two free family trips to Disneyland for employees as part of their campaign to bolster a “no” vote. C.A.T.U., the employee anti-union committee, distributed at least 6 letters and leaflets and talked with co-workers. By way of contrast, the union sent one letter and video to employee homes and distributed seven leaflets and four newsletters at the worksite in addition to its initial calling and home visits.

- **C.A.T.U. - the employee anti-union committee.** In many union avoidance campaigns the employer encourages and supports (directly or indirectly) employees who set up a anti-union committee. At Ryder, employees set up such a committee they called C.A.T.U.. Like their union counterparts, C.A.T.U. organizers distributed leaflets and talked with co-workers on the worksite.

  C.A.T.U. organizers insisted they worked independently from management. In a leaflet headed “A message from C.A.T.U.,” organizers rejected the union’s claim that “Ryder has hired and is paying a group to ‘bust up’ the union.” They declared “we are in no way working with management...we are not getting paid by Ryder to put out the fliers .... we are people like you doing something we believe in ... standing up for the company we believe in.”

  C.A.T.U.’s anti-union message clearly made a difference. In a poll of Ryder workers taken after the election, a strong majority of workers believed that the anti-union campaign was more effective getting their message out than union organizers. Swing voters - those who were undecided about whether to join the union - said that contact from their anti-union co-workers was one of the most important reasons for the union’s defeat (7% of swing voters compared to 1-2% of union supporters and opponents - Hart, 1999).

- **An inherent imbalance in power.** The effectiveness of management’s anti-union campaign comes in part from the inherent differences of power in the workplace. Employers often argue that they should have a right to tell employees their side of the story – a right Taft-Hartley enshrined into law.

  But such employer assertions of “fairness” ignore that any relationship between the employer and employee is an inherently unequal one. A union
can persuade, can plead, can even threaten, but ultimately they have very little if any power to affect an employee’s employment status or working conditions. The employer, however, has the power to discipline, even fire the employee. In other work situations, disobeying a supervisor’s instructions are grounds for discipline or discharge for insubordination. With that in mind, the line between an employer benignly communicating a point of view and that employer directing an employee (implicitly or explicitly) to act in a certain way regarding union activities is a very fine line indeed.

This inherent imbalance of power between employer and employee is well-recognized in other labor-management relationships. For example, sexual harassment laws recognize that a supervisor who requests to see a subordinate outside of work for a date puts the subordinate employee in an awkward position. Although the employer may view such a request as harmless, it is inherently coercive because the subordinate employee can reasonably believe a refusal might result in retaliation. Similarly, an employee might perceive failure to obey a supervisor’s stated request for a “no vote” on union representative as potentially provoking retaliation, even termination.

**Illegal company tactics overturn the election**

On May 26-27, 1999, the NLRB supervised the election of 1759 eligible Ryder employees at twelve polling locations throughout the Twin Cities. When the ballots were counted the union had narrowly lost the election by 59 votes - 723 “no” votes and 664 “yes” votes.

**Unfair labor practice charges.**

In the weeks leading up to the election the union began filing unfair labor practice charges alleging that Ryder’s aggressive anti-union tactics constituted illegal interference with their employees’ right to organize under the National Labor Relations Act. The union filed separate charges covering multiple events on April 12, April 22, May 5 and again immediately following the election. The union charged Ryder of multiple counts of threatening union organizers (to the point of firing several), making illegal promises of benefits if the union failed, illegally surveying workers about union activities and harassing union organizers, illegally barring union organizers from distributing union literature and offering a trip to Disneyland as an illegal bribe to vote “no.”

The length of time it took to adjudicate these charges, and the minimal penalties enacted, underscore why many people believe the NLRB process is broken and agree with the Human Rights Watch that workers’ right to organize in the United States is a legal fiction.

The NLRB dismissed some charges and union withdrew others. The Regional Director then grouped the remaining allegations into two charges. The first charge
regarded Ryder’s offer of two Disneyland trips if at least 1450 employees voted. Two days before the election, management sent all employees a letter announcing the Disneyland offer and then hung posters announcing the offer next to “Vote No” posters throughout its facilities. The second charge included three specific allegations that Ryder had illegally: (1) prohibited union distribution of literature; (2) promised to address employee concerns through an employer initiated employee association if employees voted the union down; (3) implied that negotiations with the union would futile.

A pyrrhic NLRB victory
It took a year and a half for these charges to wind their way through the NLRB hearing and appeal process. As early as September 1999, the NLRB Regional Director Ronald Sharp had decided to set aside the May election and direct a new election based on the first charge – the Disney trip offer and “Vote No” posters. Sharp (and the union) believed this offer created an atmosphere that made employee free choice improbable. It wasn’t until a year later in August 2000 that a Minneapolis administrative law judge ruled on the second unfair labor practice charge. The judge upheld all of the other union allegations except the charge of illegal employer promises to negotiate with an “employee association.”

First Student appealed both rulings. In January 2001, the full National Labor Relations Board in Washington, D.C. affirmed this August ruling and ordered that First Student “cease and desist” its illegal activities (20 months after the fact) and post for 60 days the judge’s determination of illegal activities. Two weeks earlier, in December 2000, the NLRB also sustained the union’s Disneyland charge, more than a year after the Regional Director’s decision, and a year and a half after the election. The NLRB overturned the May 1999 election and directed a new election be held in April 2001 – nearly two years after the first election.

The union had won on many of its major charges, but in the meantime the organizing campaign had stalled and worker interest sagged while much of the union’s attention became focused on legal maneuvering within the bureaucratic confines of the NLRB appeals process.

Analyzing worker reactions and attitudes
In July 1999, FirstGroup in Great Britain purchased Ryder and it became part of First Student. At first there was some slim hope that First Student would settle the unfair labor practice charges based on the company’s relationship with unions in Great Britain. This hope quickly passed as First Student aggressively continued to defend and appeal the NLRB charges.

In October 1999 it appeared there may be a second election, and SEIU hired Peter Hart and Associates to conduct a poll of First Student workers. This poll is as close
to exit poll data as is available and offers illuminating insights into worker attitudes about their work and their reactions to union and anti-union messages and tactics.

**Worker reactions to the organizing campaign**
The election results, on their face, suggest an evenly divided workforce, which poll data substantiates (Figure 1).

When asked how they would vote if another union election were held today, 34% of the workers said they would definitely vote for the union, 33% said they would definitely vote against the union, and the remaining 33% expressed varying degrees of support either way or were unsure how they would vote. Within each of the opposing groups, about one-third to one-half were “hard core” supporters, representing a combined 20-30% of the total workforce. The “middle” 33% of the workers represents the persuadable or “swing voters” in the election. In this evenly divided workforce, how these swing voters ultimately voted would be decisive.

The pollster then asked workers how they had actually voted in the May 1999 election. Their responses supported the accuracy of the hypothetical campaign results (Figure 2). Workers who said they would vote for a union or against a union in the test election, overwhelmingly voted for or against the union in the real election. The swing voters split with 35% voting for the union, 40% voting against, and a large number -- 25% -- either not sure, or more likely, not telling. These swing voters, like swing voters in political elections, may tend to be more reluctant to share how they intend to vote, either because they don’t know, or often because they see themselves as independent and voting is their own private decision. What Figure 2 also shows is that the union lost the swing voters, and consequently the election. The big question is “Why?”
The employer waged an effective anti-union campaign. The employer waged an aggressive anti-union campaign, along with the anti-union employee group C.A.T.U. By more than a 2 to 1 margin workers believed that the anti-union campaign was very effective or fairly effective compared to those workers who saw the anti-union campaign as only somewhat effective to not effective at all. When broken out by union preference (Figure 4) the same basic pattern held. Interestingly, both union supporters and union opponents believed the employer had waged an effective campaign. Swing voters saw the anti-union campaign as very effective, although at a somewhat lower level.

By contrast, by a much smaller margin workers believed that the union had conducted an effective campaign: 52% believed that the union conducted a very effective to fairly effective campaign compared to 44% who did not (Figure 5). When broken down by union preference, not too surprisingly, union supporters overwhelmingly thought that the union had waged an effective campaign while workers who voted against the union believed the opposite. What is very
revealing is that the majority of swing voters believed that the union campaign was only somewhat effective or not effective at all.

So why did swing voters think management and C.A.T.U. ran a more effective campaign than the union? Although this question cannot be fully answered, the October poll offers many hints.

- **Workers were divided on job satisfaction.** While a majority of First Student workers expressed satisfaction with their jobs, distinct differences emerge when the workforce is broken out (Figure 7). Although a sizeable number of union supporters expressed overall satisfaction with their jobs, 58% said they were only somewhat satisfied or not satisfied with their work. By contrast, workers who voted against the union overwhelmingly expressed satisfaction with their jobs by a 3:1 margin.

Swing voters were evenly split. That half of the swing voters expressed dissatisfaction with their jobs represents potential ground to organize around and presents an interesting conundrum and challenge to the union campaign: while half of the swing voters are dissatisfied with their work and could be responsive to agitation around this dissatisfaction, half are satisfied and may be turned off by such tactics. Interestingly, and the subject of more discussion below, more than half of those swing voters expressing dissatisfaction ended up voting against the union.

When asked about specific
benefits, workers expressed their general satisfaction with wages and job security and believed overall they did not see favoritism as a big problem on the job (Figure 8). This data runs counter to the union bargaining survey circulated by organizers during the campaign. Wages were one of the top two issues in this survey (only behind health insurance) and job security and favoritism by management were close behind. One explanation for this discrepancy may be that those returning surveys were self-selected by their degree of dissatisfaction or selectively solicited by union organizers from those who they had closest contact with. That is, union supporters tended to be more dissatisfied with employer benefits (Figure 9) and were also those more likely to return the survey.

Overall, workers ranked the most dissatisfaction with the specific benefits they either did not have (paid sick leave, vacation, and paid time off) or were minimal (pensions) or too expensive to afford (health care).

Analyzing specific benefits according to union preference reveals a familiar pattern: Union supporters tended to be more dissatisfied, while opponents tended to be more satisfied. Swing voters come out somewhere in between (Figure 9). One notable exception in this pattern is wages. While union opponents expressed satisfaction with their wages by a 3:1 margin, swing voters and union supporters were equally likely to be dissatisfied with only a slight majority expressing overall satisfaction.

Interestingly, when the question was asked about paid sick leave, all three groups of employees expressed little satisfaction, even union opponents, albeit to a somewhat lesser degree compared to the other two groups.
What these results suggest is that wages were not a driving issue in the campaign, although few would have likely turned down a raise, and those issues that most workers were dissatisfied with did not necessarily translate into union support, even if the worker believed a union could improve the benefit.

- **Worker attitudes divided on unions and management.** Worker satisfaction with their job and benefits generally tracked their attitude toward their employer, and tracked inversely their attitude toward unions (Figure 10). Union opponents tended to be much more satisfied with their jobs and benefits and much more positive toward their employer than union supporters (80% compared to 49%). Only 4% of union opponents expressed negative feelings toward their employer, while 25% of the union supporters had negative attitudes. Similarly, union opponents overwhelmingly said they trusted what management said compared to union supporters (72% to 26%). Union supporters expressed mistrust of management by a 2 to 1 margin (Figure 11).

When we analyze swing voters we see a very intriguing split. When asked the more general question about their attitude toward their employer, swing voters were significantly more positive than union supporters. Two-thirds of swing voters expressed a positive attitude, compared to only 13% who were negative. However, on the more specific question of whether they trusted what their employer said, a majority of swing voters expressed distrust – more than twice that of union opponents.
When asked about their attitudes toward labor unions, not surprisingly, union supporters expressed strongly positive attitudes, and by an equally impressive margin union opponents had negative reactions to labor unions (Figure 12).

Again, analysis of swing voters is revealing. When asked the more abstract question about whether it was generally a good or bad idea for workers to be represented by unions, over half of all swing voters thought it was a good idea for unions to represent workers (Figure 13). Even 26% of union opponents agreed with the abstract idea of unions representing workers as a basically positive thing. But when the question became more personal and specific about the individual worker's own attitudes toward labor unions, all three groups became more negative. Less than a third of swing voters had personally positive feelings toward unions. Still only 20% expressed negative feelings. The largest group of swing voters expressed neutrality on the subject.

These two gauges of worker sentiment - attitudes toward management and toward unions - point out both opportunities and obstacles for persuading swing voters to vote for union representation. On the one hand swing voters had positive feelings about their employer - in the abstract - but at the same time tended to not trust their employer. Likewise, they expressed little ideological opposition to unions, and even thought that they made sense in the abstract, but more neutral in their own personal feelings. This might be interpreted as ambivalence, or lack of knowledge, or as keeping an open mind. In either case, opportunities existed for the union to make its case for change.
Perceived advantages and disadvantages of a unionized workplace.

When workers were asked whether they thought a union would improve the workplace or make it worse, once again the three groups split (Figure 14). An overwhelming majority (81%) of union supporters saw the union making the workplace better, and virtually none (2%) thought a union would make it worse. Likewise, while very few swing voters thought that unionization would make things worse (6%) less than one-half thought a union would improve the workplace. Significantly and perhaps critically, 37% thought a union would make no difference. Curiously, while 19% of union opponents said a union would make things worse, the strong majority (60%) thought it would make no difference.

Workers were then asked to identify the biggest advantages and disadvantages that a union would bring (Figures 15 and 16). Both union supporters and swing voters saw the union's focus on worker's interest and better wages and benefits as the two greatest union advantages, although swing voters were less optimistic about winning these increased benefits compared to union supporters. Union supporters were much more likely to see a union improving labor management relations, while this barely registered as an advantage for swing voters. To the contrary, a significant number of swing voters saw organizing as hurting labor management relations (Figure 17). By more than a 2:1 margin swing voters
thought a union would either make labor management relations worse or make no difference; only 27% believed a union would improve relations.

Finally, a significant number of no voters believed a union could help secure certain benefits, like paid sick leave and paid time off, but this did not translate into support for the union.

Overwhelmingly, workers identified paying dues as the biggest disadvantage of unions. Few of even the most ardent union supporters can honestly say they enjoy paying dues. But the bigger fear, exploited mightily by management, was whether the union could deliver enough benefit for the amount of dues workers would have to pay. Workers identified two other disadvantages: worsening labor management relationships and being forced to strike. The small number of workers who said that everything listed was a disadvantage likely represented the hard core ideological union opposition, while those who said none were disadvantages likely represented hard core ideological union supporters.

Summary of worker profiles
From the poll data we can draw general profiles for each of the three worker groups.

- **Union supporters.** The workers who supported unionization tended to be younger workers who had been with the company for a few years. The union did enjoy significant support among retired older workers, contrary to union fears that these workers would oppose the union because they had little stake in the company or saw their job as extra money rather than a career. And, contrary to many organizing campaigns, union supporters in the Ryder campaign were more likely to be men than women. As a whole, union supporters were much less satisfied with their wages and benefits, and although a slight majority were positive about their job overall, they were much less positive than both swing voters and union opponents. Union supporters were much more likely to mistrust management. Union supporters were much more likely to believe that a union would bring about positive changes in labor-management relations and win higher wages and benefits.
• Union opponents. The workers who opposed the union tended to be older workers and women. They were generally happy with the company, tended to trust management (although this group was the least likely to trust government and the media) and were satisfied with their wages and more tolerant of their lack of other benefits. Hard core ideological anti-union opponents represented a relatively small number of the group as a whole – about 25%. A significant number of union opponents disliked dues, thought unions were self-serving or were simply ineffective, or had had previous bad experiences with unions.

• Swing voters. The middle third of the workforce that comprised the swing voters tended to be independent minded. They had some serious concerns about their employer, and tended to dislike their wages and benefits, but were also concerned about disruption and conflict in the workplace. They were more positive about their jobs as a whole than union supporters, but less positive than union opponents. As a whole they were not ideologically opposed to unions. They even saw several positive attributes: they believed unions generally looked out after worker interests and could help raise wages and benefits. Many swing voters evaluated the election and made their decision on unionization based on some “fact” situation – some unions they saw as good, some as bad; sometimes unions were necessary to represent workers, sometimes they were not – it all depended on the specific company, the specific union and the particularities of the situation.

Analyzing the effectiveness of campaign messages
Both pro- and anti-union campaigns communicated extensively with workers. Both campaigns conducted one-on-one conversations with workers and distributed many letters, leaflets and newsletters. It is not possible to analyze what messages organizers delivered in private conversations. For this section I will examine the key messages each side conveyed through their written materials.

The union message
I have roughly grouped the union’s messages into three categories which I describe below.

• Inoculation messages. Oftentimes the union used information to try to inoculate against potential employer conduct or answer worker concerns. For example, several union leaflets and newsletter stories emphasized workers’ right to hold an election free from employer coercion and threats. This was both informative to workers and at the same time inoculated them against employer threats and intimidation – now seen as an attempt to deny guaranteed rights.

Sometimes these inoculation messages defended against charges made by the employer, and as such sometimes sounded defensive. For example, union leaflets and newsletters explained that dues were not as high as
alleged, and what exactly the amount would be, what they paid for, and what workers would be received in return. Such defensive battles, while sometimes necessary, can also detract from messages that more effectively persuade workers to act collectively in their own interest.

• **The union advantage.** One of the key union themes detailed the specific wage and benefit advantages of joining a union. Several leaflets compared Ryder’s wages and benefits to the wages and benefits of local school district bus drivers under SEIU contracts. These unionized workers received much higher wages and greater benefits - the message was that there was a material advantage to joining a union.

• **Get a voice in the workplace.** Union communications also made a more general appeal to unionization as a path to securing a voice in the workplace. One bus driver eloquently summed up his reason for joining SEIU the union’s first newsletter:

> It is important to understand that we began this campaign not as an attack on Ryder management but as a way of gaining the voice we need to bargain as equal partners with management in obtaining the things that are important to us” (Bus Stop News, v1n1).

Another writer in the same newsletter wrote: “I believe the union helps us to dream better things for ourselves and those we serve. Everyone is a winner” (Bus Stop News, v1n1). Still other workers talked about democratic values like fair treatment and respect. Others talked about the security of bargaining a contract. Many leaflets and newsletters contained a general appeal for more and better of a laundry list of issues, or as one newsletter before the election put it: “Vote Yes for: wages, health insurance, paid sick leave, paid holidays, fair and equal treatment, a voice on the job.”

The overt union message was a positive one about coming together to secure higher wages, more benefits, and contractual guarantees. Equally important, however, is the tone with which this message was delivered. Many times writers framed more positive union goals using examples or language that expressed defensiveness, anger, and conflict.

A quick analysis of union campaign materials shows that two-thirds of the unions leaflets and letters emphasized either inoculation against employer threats and misstatements, or worker agitation. One such leaflet asked workers to confront the Regional Manager and “Ask Bruce” to write in how much he makes. The top of the leaflet lists Ryder’s top officers and their six and seven figure salaries and suggests that Ryder workers are getting a raw deal, and that Bruce is scared to let workers know how much he earns.
Similarly, 57% (34/60) of the testimonials, cartoons, and graphics found in union newsletters emphasized worker complaints or described workplace conflict. In the first newsletter, one driver declares, “RSTS does not respect us.” Another worker writes that “some of his closest friends have been fired for minor incidents while other employees get jobs created for them because they got in good with management” (*Bus Stop News* v1n2).

Some writers emphasized that gains will only come through actions like strikes or other provocative tactics. One bus driver recounted his previous experience with a union and bargaining: “The threat of a strike did the trick that time, but you know what they say about writing checks” (*Bus Stop News* v1n2). Another worker remarked that “only by having a loud voice will your voices be heard” (*Bus Stop News* v1n3).

Other writers simply sounded angry. An ex-Ryder employee wrote to her former co-workers: “For those of you who still work for Ryder you need a contract, not that worthless Ryder booklet that still gives them the right to change overnight and treat people any way they want to” (*Bus Stop News* v1n3).

Worker anger and union conflict is not only understandable but oftentimes necessary in organizing campaigns. But in an NLRB election campaign, the tactics and messages necessary to win concessions from the employer are also the ones that tend to alienate voters, especially swing voters. There is a very real tension between anger and agitation that sparks change and that which is perceived as simply negative and the product of complainers and malcontents. Likewise, those who fear conflict may see a graphic of a fist thrust into the air (an expression of solidarity for some) as an uncomfortable symbol of anger and disruption. There are no easy answers to this conundrum. Only that how organizers frame and convey the central messages of their campaigns in both word and deed can have enormous impacts on the reception of those messages by the workers with whom they most need to communicate.

**The employer message**

The employer on the other hand has no such problem with creating conflict, dissension and disruption through its messages. Cohen and Hurd in their study of conflict in organizing campaigns found that “disruption itself can become a tool for management” (193). They argue that management oftentimes creates conflict to target undecided voters, and that “management and their consultants can take actions that polarize the workplace and then transfer blame to ‘outside’ union organizers and inside ‘troublemakers’” (181). In effect, many employers use conflict to send a message that union “malcontents are committed to a confrontational approach that will translate into a state of perpetual conflict if the organizing campaign succeeds” (182).
In 1999, Ryder management, its anti-union consultants and the anti-union employee group all sang from the same hymnal. Four major themes emerge.

- **It’s your money - keep it.** Management and the anti-union employee group consistently equated the union with dues, fees, fines and assessments - a standard tactic in the anti-union consultant toolchest. C.A.T.U. headlined one of its first leaflets “Keep your money you earned it.” Management tried to raise questions about union propriety regarding dues and questioned its motives for trying to organize workers. One management leaflet declared: “The union wants you to give them a million dollars – for what?” Another was blunter: “Please think about why Local 284 of the SEIU wants you ... it comes down to money ... the money you have now ... They want it!”

- **The union is an outside third party.** It was standard for management to refer to the union organizing committee as “union pushers” who were out to satisfy a “union agenda” not serve the best interests of Ryder workers. Management sought to portray the union as a novice with private school bus employees. While technically true, such claims ignored SEIU’s long history representing school district bus employees. One letter informed workers that “Local 284 of the SEIU does not represent any school bus drivers who work for a company like you. You would be an experiment for them.” And in a particularly personal attack, a management leaflet presumably quoted an SEIU organizer as saying Ryder workers “would be an important acquisition for the union.” The leaflet concludes that “someone should tell F--------n that you are a person, you have rights ... you have a vote!” Putting aside whether or not this quote is accurate or taken out of context, management consistently portrayed itself as representing the best interests of all employees, while the union represented only its own narrow institutional interests.

- **There union can offer no guarantees.** Management wanted to leave its employees with the impression that joining SEIU was an exercise in futility without guarantees to make the workplace better, and with a likely chance it would become worse. Four terminal managers sent out a letter early in the campaign that read:

  *The union pushers continue to bang on their one drum and that is the cost of family medical benefits is to [sic] high for most employees. Of course, they fail to offer any meaningful suggestions on how this issue can be resolved.*

Another management letter read:

*The union cannot do anything more than negotiate with what you now have and it cannot force the company to do more than the company decided or otherwise agrees to.*
Many leaflets intoned that wages and benefits could go up, they could go down, or they could stay the same - you just couldn't know for sure. These suggestions (some would call them threats) tried to establish that the company would remain in charge, even if the union prevailed in the election, and that union complaints would not translate into results. Both messages were direct appeals to swing voters.

Finally, C.A.T.U. combined the two themes of dues and futility and declared SEIU as a “Pay your dues and get nothing union ....”

- **Let’s continue working as a team.** The company also portrayed itself as interested in building a team to make the company a better place to work. They contrasted this positive image with the union which they portrayed as a divisive, dues grubbing outsider who did not understand or care to understand the concerns of the workers.

  An example of this appeal to worker pride was signed by the Regional Manager who addressed workers directly:

  > You are important ... protect your rights, let’s again send the message that the union is not wanted here. Together, without a union, we will continue to move forward.

  Management offered similar positive messages of teamwork as counterpoints to union disruption and conflict.

  > Let’s continue to work together – there are a lot of issues ... all valid - we understand them, we together understand them - the outsiders don’t.

**Losing the middle**

With a level playing field (or at minimum with a less aggressive anti-union campaign) the union would almost certainly have won the Ryder campaign. Even with an aggressive anti-union campaign and multiple illegal employer tactics the union lost by only 59 votes. Any number of factors could explain the narrow loss.

What is clearer is that Ryder management won the competition for the middle and theirs was the compelling message for a majority of swing voters. The company effectively raised concerns: conflict would increase; there could be no guarantees of higher wages and benefits; the union was more concerned about building its numbers and securing dues than caring for Ryder employees as individual people. Finally, management appealed to swing voter’s independent thinking, sense of pride, and desires for Ryder to be a positive place to work. The combination proved sufficient.
In part, the union campaign played into the perceptions management established. A significant number of union communications conveyed anger or voiced complaint. While swing voters could have interpreted these complaints as supporting their own dissatisfaction with their wages and benefits, they may just as easily seen them as substantiating employer characterizations of union organizers as outside agitators and union supporters as complainers and malcontents. And while the union demonstrated a clear union difference and their success winning impressive wages and benefits for school bus drivers, there is also a danger in setting up a credibility gap when comparing non-union wages and benefits with well established contracts. Such comparisons run the risk of appearing to over-promise what is realistically possible, certainly in the short term, and erode credibility, especially among swing voters who saw themselves basing their decisions on a case-by-case analysis of the facts.

Ultimately, most workers did not appear to base their decision on deficiencies in Ryder’s wages, benefits and working conditions. If these had been the driving issues, the poll data suggests that a majority of swing voters would have supported the union and with their support SEIU would almost certainly have won. There is also no question that the employer’s anti-union animus created a toxic environment, a fact supported by several NLRB rulings. If Hurd and Cohen are correct, creating this toxic environment might have been precisely management’s intent: workplace conflict started in earnest when the union came and it will only end when the union leaves.

In the end, union organizers failed to establish enough internal strength among workers themselves to successfully build the solidarity and worker education necessary for the majority of Ryder workers to believe that collective action could change their workplace for the better. Swing voters may not have fully trusted what management said, but they believed even less in the union or that change was possible or worth the cost.

Another bite at the apple - the 2001 First Student campaign
On December 29, 2000, the NLRB finally overturned the May 1999 campaign and directed a new election. SEIU began rebuilding its organizing committee and contacting workers in January and February 2001, once the NLRB had scheduled a new election for April 18-19, 2001.

In many ways, the 2001 campaign was a simply a replay of the 1999 campaign. The election covered 1700 First Student employees at 11 terminals. The union built a solid organizing committee, tried to blitz workers with house visits, generated community support, and distributed a blizzard of leaflets and newsletters. Many of the themes remained the same as in 1999, even the campaign kept its slogan – “It’s a Real Job.” Likewise, First Student ran an aggressive anti-union campaign,
committed additional unfair labor practices, and employed many of the same tactics and messages that proved successful in 1999.

There were a few new twists. Just as the First Student campaign began two SEIU bus driver units in surrounding school districts went on strike. Union organizers sought to frame these strikes as rare, but necessary and powerful ways employees could leverage better wages and benefits. Management used the strikes to drive home their theme that unions only cause conflict and disruption in the workplace. The company headlined one leaflet “SEIU - Strike Happy Union” and another warned of the “High cost of going out on strike” - no pay, no benefits, no unemployment, and the possibility of being permanently replaced.

The union tried to pressure First Student to remain neutral in the campaign. A delegation of clergy from the Twin Cities Religion Labor Network delivered a set of ground rules to First Student management, but when the Regional Manager was not there (or available) they left their petition at the front desk. Several elected leaders and major contractors sent letters asking First Student to remain neutral. Both the Minneapolis and St. Paul school boards sent letters reminding First Student of their “Right to Organize” resolutions passed in 1999 (4/6/01 and 4/9/01), and Attorney General Mike Hatch wrote a letter urging First Student to insure a fair election (Hatch 4/9/01). The letters and delegations had no apparent consequence, in part because they occurred so late in the campaign, less than two weeks before the election, and in part because without a meaningful way to carry through on the sentiments and threaten First Student’s contracts or their economic bottom line there was little incentive for First Student to change its ways.

The election result was the same. If anything, there appeared to be less energy and worker involvement in the campaign. When the ballots were counted, the union once again narrowly lost 615 to 511, a margin of just over 100 votes.

Organizing the edges -- the Vision and Septran campaigns
In early 2002, Local 284 began testing the waters again to see if there was interest in a third campaign at First Student. This time they hoped to run a non-NLRB card-check campaign. Pushing for card check offers many advantages over an NLRB campaign, chief among them is that organizers do not need to worry quite as much how aggressive tactics against the employer could impact undecided voters in a close election.

First Student responded immediately with a letter placed in employee paychecks:

Notice – They’re back and they want your money
They have found they cannot win legally in a sealed ballot election and now they are trying to force you to pay dues to them from another angle.... SEIU does not want to allow you to vote. They want to take that right away from you.
In the face of another aggressive anti-union campaign and with little interest coming from First Student workers, SEIU never launched a campaign.

The Vision Campaign
Failing to organize First Student, the largest Twin Cities private school bus company, SEIU organizers turned to other more peripheral targets. Workers at Vision Transportation Inc. expressed interest in organizing. SEIU began a campaign in March 2003. Vision was considerably smaller than First Student, with about 130 employees, and considerably fewer bus lines. Once again, SEIU organizers built a committee, held small organizing meetings, distributed leaflets and newsletters, sent out bargaining surveys. And like First Student, Vision fought back with an anti-union campaign.

When the NLRB counted ballots on May 13, 2003, the union lost by four votes (65 to 61) with 7 challenged ballots. The union appealed the election and when all the eligible ballots were counted in early June the union lost by a single vote.

The Septran Campaign – Round One
Between the two Ryder and First Student campaigns, SEIU tried to organize Septran Inc., another smaller company with 191 employees and contracts in the Minneapolis and Bloomington school districts. Organizers began building a committee in February 2000. When the committee did not grow, SEIU staff organizers began to take on greater responsibility for the campaign with more visible roles. The union secured many letters of support from local legislators and elected officials asking Septran to be neutral in the campaign, but Septran simply ignored them and continued to run its anti-union campaign.

On May 22, 2000, the union lost 98 to 54. SEIU immediately filed an objection claiming that Septran illegally used a supervisor as a election observer. In July, the NLRB Regional Director sustained the union’s challenge and directed a new election. Three weeks later, with little chance of winning, the union withdrew its petition and the second election was never held.

The Septran Campaign – Round Two
Three years later SEIU organizers tried to organize Septran again. This time they began building support by gathering signatures for the Accountability in Pupil Transportation (APT) Project, an SEIU-inspired legislative initiative to push for more money for bus driver wages and benefits.

After a number of Septran employees expressed interest in trying another campaign, SEIU kicked off its second Septran campaign in March 2003. The campaign ran into difficulties almost immediately. Initial lists were incomplete and based mostly on conversations with workers, old lists from 2000, and Septran workers who had
signed the APT Project. Based on these lists, organizers underestimated the number of Septran workers. When the union filed for an election in April with 49 cards they thought they had about 50% of the unit signed; in actuality, the signed cards represented merely 37% of the actual number of 132 employees—enough to trigger and election but hardly enough to inspire confidence in the result. Likewise, because of poor lists the initial house call blitz missed about a third of the workers. Septran immediately began an anti-union campaign and these workers first heard from their employer, rather than the union.

This campaign was decidedly organizer driven. Over the next six weeks, organizers slowly contacted workers and assessed them, but the campaign never got more than 58 cards, or about 44% of the unit. Furthermore, the organizing committee never really came together and few workers took prominent and visible leadership roles in the campaign. One union leaflet contained testimonials from bus drivers on the importance of organizing, but not one of the quoted or pictured workers was a current Septran employee. When organizing meetings drew ever fewer workers and after SEIU organizers could not secure more than 24 signatures on a “Vote Yes” petition, they decided to pull out in May 2004 without going to an election.

**Developing a non-NLRB strategy: St. Paul’s PI PA campaign**

The Ryder, First Student, Septran and Vision campaigns made manifest the failures of the NLRB secret ballot election. NLRB delays and rules allowed employers to wage aggressive and highly effective anti-union campaigns with virtual impunity. Without neutralizing the employer’s ability to wage a hostile campaign, and without means to impact their financial bottom line, Local 284 concluded that traditional NLRB campaigns were simply inadequate to organize the industry.

In late 2002 and early 2003 SEIU and community allies began looking for ways to use key public contracting agencies to leverage alternative recognition process (like card check and neutrality) agreements with employers. Such agreements could ensure that workers could organize free from hostile employer actions.

What came out of these discussions was a convergence of interests. Unions wanted card check and neutrality and contracting agencies wanted predictability. The idea was for the St. Paul School Board to use its authority as a contractor of services to insist on certain standards regarding union elections by all of its contractors. This became known as a “proprietary interest protection agreement” or PI PA.

The provision is called “proprietary protection” because by law, the NLRB has preempted other governmental units—states, municipalities, counties and school boards—from regulating labor relations, including restrictions on union organizing. The NLRB claims this area solely as its own. However, the law permits government entities to act like any other individual in the marketplace and protect their investment. In other words, in their role as a contractor, the school board could
require reasonable standards to protect its proprietary interest, just as long as it was not for the purpose of regulating labor relations. Seemingly a little like splicing a hair, it is the same rationale that permits government agencies to insist on project labor agreements for construction projects when using public money.

St. Paul's PIPA proposal included two key elements that applied to school bus contractors:

1. a requirement that all contractors agree to a card check recognition process within 60 days of being contacted in writing of a union's interest in organizing its workers (the school board was unwilling to go as far as requiring neutrality); and

2. during the course of the organizing campaign, so long as the agreement was followed, both parties would be prohibited from taking action against each other.

According to the PIPA resolution, all contractors were required to agree to the language as a condition of getting the contract.

SEIU worked with the St. Paul Trades and Labor, Progressive Minnesota, and several St. Paul School Board members to lobby school board members, who passed a PIPA requirement on May 6, 2003 with only one dissenting vote.

Then it started to unravel. On June 17, the district awarded First Student 280 of the 350 routes, or 80% of its busing services for a total of $12.2 million before First Student had signed the PIPA agreement or secured an agreement with SEIU. Partly this was due to the lack of political will (or the community power) on the school board to hold up the contract until First Student signed. The second reason is one of practicality: there had been no thought given to who an alternative bidder might be that would agree to the PIPA and could threaten First Student's contracts. Without this pressure, and with the fall looming, little choice remained but to let the contracts and take the matter to court.

In the meantime the union requested the names of First Student drivers doing district work and began a blitz campaign to secure signed cards, before First Student had signed the PIPA. Between poor and out-dated lists and the end of the school year, the campaign quickly faltered and the matter moved into the courts for the year.

In addition, little groundwork had been laid with workers, while management had continued their anti-union campaign. Now the employer claimed it was the union that was trying to take away their right to vote. In a painful conclusion to the campaign, two drivers wrote a letter on June 2, 2003, to the NLRB Regional Director which they copied to the St. Paul school board stating that a majority of First Student
employees had signed a petition stating they desired no union representation. The letter continued:

We do not want them to represent us. Would you please tell them to leave us alone and stop trying to organize us? Tell them to keep their recruiters away from us at First Student, Snelling and at the schools.

A year later, faced with potentially steep legal costs, and with few contractor options besides First Student, the St. Paul school board settled the lawsuit and did not renew the PIPA requirement.

The PIPA strategy failed, just as previous organizing attempts under the NLRB failed, not because they were inherently failed campaigns, but because a combination of anti-union hostility by the employer, lack of power from the union and community, and timing. In the case of the PIPA, even if First Student had agreed to the PIPA, it did not address one of the biggest obstacles to organizing: the employer’s hostility and anti-union campaign. And in either case, the school board did not have any realistic recourse for re-bidding the routes, since little attention had been placed on grooming a competitor. A similar situation developed in the Seattle school district in early 2005 after First Student refused to abide by the district’s PIPA requirement. Whether a “white knight” contractor is available to assume Seattle’s routes is still an open question at the time of this writing.

Conclusions and new directions

Not all of SEIU’s campaign efforts were perfect, but on a level playing field they would certainly have been good enough. They ran comprehensive and innovative campaigns, tried to organize an entire market, and picked the appropriate targets. What they faced was the difficulty many workers face organizing under the NLRB’s rules and procedures, and what virtually all organizing campaigns now face: active, coordinated and hostile employer responses aimed to dishearten workers and delay the process. That Ryder and First Student were massive global corporations with enormous resources to litigate and muster against any one union organizing campaign in the end proved to be too much.

The lesson of the past 5 years of organizing is that to effectively organize large multi-national corporations unions need to develop comprehensive multi-national organizing strategies. The object cannot be a series of small and isolated NLRB elections, or even a broader isolated regional market, but a card check strategy with employer neutrality that organizes the entire industry at once. To secure such an agreement, the union must be able to deliver economic pain to the corporation or it will not move. Moral persuasion and public embarrassment are simply not sufficient.

With these lessons and objectives, SEIU launched a massive campaign in the summer of 2004 partnering with the Transport and General Workers Union of Great
Britain. Shortly after the 1999 campaign, Shane Allers had contacted T&G. In the 2001 campaign, T&G sent a letter of solidarity and support to First Student workers.

In the present campaign SEIU and T&G are building a real partnership that moves beyond symbolic gestures of solidarity. Together they are planning economic actions both in Great Britain and in the United States that makes it clear that there will be economic consequences for companies that do not agree to rules that guarantee a fair and honest recognition process. Their goal is larger. It is no longer school bus drivers in the Twin Cities, but about creating the largest school bus driver union in the United States. The first two targets are First Student and Durham. Whether this campaign will be successful is a story that is still being written.