

VIEWS FROM IN

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Money Squandered by MTA Managers, the Mayor & the Gov

I'M writing this early Sunday. By the time you read it, I hope there's been genuine progress toward a contract settlement between TWU Local 100 and the MTA. A transit strike is the last thing sensible New Yorkers, including our 33,000 hard-working members, want or need.

Yet, even if the MTA makes an acceptable offer by Wednesday and the immediate crisis is averted, we can't lose sight of the serious and inescapable questions that will persist. These questions include:

When will the MTA abandon the heavy-handed, adversarial style of management toward its employees that made this crisis (and past crises) inevitable? How will public transit and other vital public services be financed in the future? And when will the state and the city get their funding priorities straight, and stop wasting billions on "corporate welfare" giveaways?

Mayor Giuliani spent a large part of the weekend threatening to fine our union into bankruptcy should our members choose to strike. But he's saying nothing about the \$2 billion his administration has squandered on subsidies, tax breaks and other costly favors to wealthy corporations.

As Time magazine said in its award-winning investigative series on corporate welfare last year, "When government distributes handouts to select companies, someone pays, either in higher taxes or reduced services."

In the name of "economic development," the Pataki and Giuliani administrations are showering corporate fatcats with favors and shortchanging MTA riders and workers. They're loot-

ing the public treasury to benefit their political allies, making the rich richer and shifting financial burdens onto the backs of beleaguered riders, workers, small businesses and taxpayers.

Every New Yorker who struggles with a budget should be angry about the scandal of subsidizing the likes of General Electric/NBC (with 1998 profits of \$9.3 billion and a CEO who collected \$68 million) and Disney/ABC (with 1998 profits of \$1.9 billion and a CEO who pocketed \$589 million).

Manhattan District Attorney Robert Morgenthau is investigating the Empire State Development Corporation (ESDC), the Pataki-picked agency that dispenses state funds to businesses, including many that return the favor by contributing generously

to Republican campaigns. ESDC chairman Charles Gargano, a veteran Pataki fund-raiser, is up to his neck in legal hot water be-

cause of questionable deals he's been pushing since Pataki took office in 1994.

There's a connection between the corporate-welfare gravy train and the condition of the buses and trains we ride every day. Overcrowding on our subways and buses, inadequate service and threats of fare hikes are all a result of distorted spending priorities and inadequate funding for public transit.

No matter what happens in this week's negotiations, champions of corporate welfare like Pataki, Giuliani and Gargano remain at odds with the workers, riders and taxpayers of New York.

Gil Rodriguez is a vice president of Transit Workers Union Local 100.



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MTA management declined The Post's offer to share its views on the talks.