

Fight the CTA Service Cuts and Rate Increases!

Since CTA President Frank Kruesi's appointment by his buddy Mayor Daley in 1997, Kruesi has proved himself to be an enemy of the poor and working people of Chicago, including both the CTA riders and employees. At the very beginning of his reign, Kruesi and his gang of bureaucrats, the CTA board, made a drastic 10% cut to services, disproportionately affecting low-income neighborhoods and the people who rely on public transit the most. These cuts were, and still are, an outrage. People lost jobs when they lost their weekend and night service. Getting to doctor's appointments and even leisure activities has become a constant struggle. The fight to restore this service has continued for 7 years now, refusing to back down.

Then at the beginning of this year, the CTA attacked all riders with a 17% fare increase. For all of us who depend on the CTA to get to work each day, this fare increase was literally a wage cut. The budget for the same year, while showing an increase in labor spending in the office of the President of 12%, showed a decrease on all other labor spending of 23%, this time ripping off its own employees.

Now the CTA is making its biggest threats ever. Service cuts of 20% have been proposed, including eliminating 30 bus routes, shortening 64 other routes, cutting night service on the Red and Blue lines, cutting daytime service on the Orange and Brown lines, and eliminating 1000 union jobs. This is all while doubling the fee for the paratransit and taxi access program for the disabled, raising parking fees by 25 cents and U-Pass rates by 10 cents a day.

Kruesi claims this is all necessary if additional funding is not granted from the state. Don't be fooled though, extra money from the state does not mean that our interests will be served. When the CTA received \$20 million from Illinois First!, none of that money ever went to restore the 1997 service cuts. Kruesi's spending habits have instead consistently reflected his ego's need for a legacy. The CTA bureaucrats' recently built themselves a palace on Lake Street, complete with granite floors and a \$119 million price tag. Grand plans are also still on the table to spend over a billion dollars on a new "circle line", increasing transport ease downtown while again cheating poorer neighborhoods of their transport needs.

Whether or not the CTA receives the additional funding from the state, Kruesi needs his bubble burst and to feel the pressure of the millions of Chicagoans he's angered. Fortunately, his attacks on both CTA riders and workers leave him vulnerable. It is riders and workers together who have the power to hit the bureaucrats where they'll feel it the most: the collection boxes and station booths. In 1978 in Nantes (France), instead of going on strike, bus drivers kept the busses rolling but "forgot" to collect any fares. This tactic has been repeated all over, from Italy to Germany to Ireland to Canada. Riders have also refused to pay fares to resist fare increases. Several cities in France now in fact have free public transportation because people banded together and simply refuse to pay. This is where our power lies.

Sure the CTA budget is in a crisis, but why should poor and working people have to pay for *their* crisis? If the CTA is going to disrupt our lives we will disrupt theirs. There will be no business as usual as long as Kruesi tries to dig himself out of his mess by cutting services, labor spending or increasing anyone's fares.



**We look forward to your comments and ideas:
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