

US - NEW YORK - Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg still very angry with "selfish" strikers

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December 20, 2005 - 4 pm - [NYC.gov](#) - Remarks by Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg as prepared for delivery [A few comments will be added in square brackets as an advocacy of pluralism and fairness. You can add your own comments by clicking on the link at the bottom of the page.]

"Good afternoon. First, I want to give everyone an update on how the City is doing and share some of my thoughts on the situation. Then we will take some questions.

"Since early this morning, the City's mass transit system has been shut down because of the selfish and illegal strike undertaken by the TWU.

"The morning rush hour was unlike anything this City has experienced in 25 years. For a lot of New Yorkers, it was not an easy commute and getting home tonight won't be easy either. The good news is New Yorkers are following the strike contingency plan we developed and put into effect early this morning.

"I took the same route into work this morning that a lot of New Yorkers did by crossing the Brooklyn Bridge on foot. Other people car pooled, roller-bladed and cycled to work.

"The City is functioning and functioning well considering the severe circumstances we are in. So far, our contingency plan is working although we may adjust elements of it, as the situation dictates. In a few hours, the evening rush hour will begin and we will do everything we can to help New Yorkers get home to their families safe and sound.

"The Police Department moved swiftly this morning to secure transit facilities and set up HOV checkpoints. The checkpoints are serving their purpose. Car volume was higher on the East River crossings before and after the 5AM to 11AM period when HOV requirements were in effect. While the HOV requirements were in effect, the average occupancy of each vehicle was more than twice the average, on the bridges and across 96th Street. We have also seen an increase in pedestrians and cyclists.

"The LIRR handled an additional 45,000 passengers this morning. Although the full contingency plan for the LIRR and Metro-North won't be fully in effect until tomorrow morning, the LIRR is now offering shuttle service at Kew Gardens, Forest Hills and Woodside. Reports from the taxi industry indicate there has been heavy use of taxis and that the zone system is working well. If you want to report price gauging, call 311 and the TLC will investigate.

"Our Police Officers are now on 12-hour tours and Commissioner Kelly has deployed Police Academy recruits to traffic posts.

"Although the FDNY hasn't seen an increase in response time, Commissioner Scoppetta has deployed extra engines and ladders in densely populated areas and deployed 25 extra ambulance shifts citywide.

"The Staten Island Ferry saw a decrease in ridership although there has been heightened demand at other ferry crossings. DOT dispatched a Staten Island Ferry to the Brooklyn Army Terminal Ferry Landing to take people over to the Whitehall Terminal in Lower Manhattan. For the evening rush, DOT will operate a ferry from Whitehall to the Brooklyn Army Terminal.

"Our Sanitation Department has moved their Manhattan garbage pickups to earlier in the morning and later in the evening, to reduce congestion during the rush hours. Alternate side of the street parking has been suspended for the duration of the strike.

"School opened two hours later as the plan called for. Students got to school safely and the schools are staffed with teachers and safety personnel. Student attendance was down but from the mid to high eighties to the low sixties, which all things considered is pretty good. Attendance at the elementary school level was excellent.

"911 is getting more calls than usual, about a 15% increase. As always, we ask that people only use 911 in an emergency. 311 is a great source of information for people. Since midnight, 311 has received over 175,000 calls, setting a new record.

"To gauge the effect on our economy, EDC and the Department of Small Business Services have been surveying the business community over the course of the day. From what we have been able to learn, the economic consequences of the strike range from severe to devastating, depending on the business.

"Retail, especially in Lower Manhattan, has been hit the hardest. Hundreds of stores haven't been able to open and some that did have had practically no business. Along one stretch of 8th Avenue, 40% of the stores weren't open.

"Businesses are struggling to get their people into work. HIP told us that 2/3 of its workforce could not make it in. Columbia House told us half its workforce didn't make it in. Also we have had alarming reports in from the food service industries, where deliveries aren't getting made. Our hotels are getting hit with cancellations and the airline industry is on edge.

"All of this because of an illegal strike.

"Let me repeat, this selfish strike is illegal. We live in a country of laws where there can be severe consequences for those who break them.

[Here, it seems fair to quote two famous excerpts from the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights.

- Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident: That all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that, to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that *whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it*, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness."

- Bill of Rights, December 15, 1791:

Amendment IX

The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people.

These quotations tend to show that there are "natural" rights prior to the laws. They also suggest that in the event of a conflict between the respect of these rights and the respect of the law, the later should be favored.

Seen from this standpoint, the accusation of illegality appears most of all as an argument used in an attempt to gain the New Yorkers' support. The TWU and its detractors try both to present a negative image of their opponents and to show that their own position is fair. It's part of the game.]

"Union members are no different.

"As we speak, the City's top lawyer is in court with the MTA seeking to convince a Supreme Court judge to punish the TWU for being in contempt of court. We will use every avenue available under the law to get the transit workers back to work. The TWU has violated the laws of our land by defying an order of the court and they must be held accountable.

"No union gets everything they want when they negotiate a new contract. I have butted heads with the PBA, the UFT, the UFA, and the Sanitation and Corrections unions - strong unions that form the backbone of our municipal workforce, keeping our streets safe and clean, putting out fires and educating our children. But for all the acrimony, they never walked out on the job, walked out on New York, and hurt the people they work for.

"Roger Toussaint and the TWU have shamefully decided they don't care about the people they work for and that they have no respect for the law. The leadership of the TWU has thuggishly turned their backs on New York City, and disgraced the noble concept of public service.

"This strike is costing us. It is costing people their jobs. It will cost billions in lost economic activity. It is robbing people of their opportunities to earn a living and provide for their families. It will hurt hard working New Yorkers struggling to get into the middle class and get benefits and health insurance as generous as TWU members. It is costing students their opportunity to learn. It will make it harder for our Police Officers, Firefighters and EMS to get where they need to go. Already, a Police Officer on a strike-related assignment was seriously injured when he was hit by a car. He is at Booth Memorial Hospital.

[If you work as a sales person, you can hope to make a better living by selling more. If you work in a "public service" company, hard worker or not, your income and pension will depend on the contract signed between the TWU local 100 and the MTA in this case. This might help to understand why this negotiation is taken so seriously. You can ask your employer to pay you more. But, if he doesn't accept, what can you do? You can ask again. But, if he still doesn't accept, what should you do? You are not asking a favor, begging for leniency. You just strive for a decent living, just as the other people described above. Then, when you see there's only one option remaining, you take it, even if you know the cost is high, for you and for the other New Yorkers, your family, your friends...]

"Roger Toussaint and the TWU need to send their members back to work and stop hurting their fellow New Yorkers. Then and only then, they should head back to the bargaining table and negotiate a new contract, like every other union does. New Yorkers always support the selfless, but don't have any sympathy for the selfish.

"In the meantime, we will need to carry on in the same intrepid spirit New Yorkers have shown since the early hours of the morning, and even since this great City was founded. We will keep our heads high and our wits intact as we learn to get around without our subways and buses. We know how to work together to overcome obstacles. Considering others we have been through, I know we will get through this one just fine."

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/om/html/2005b/pr474-05.html>