

Local 237 Puts Teamster Muscle Behind Thompson's Bid for Mayor

By DAVID SIMS | Posted: Monday, June 24, 2013 5:00 pm

Former City Comptroller William C. Thompson Jr. completed a trifecta of union endorsements in three days by getting the support of Teamsters Local 237 June 20, with President Gregory Floyd saying he would help restore the dignity of city workers after they've been ignored and attacked by the current administration.

Unlike most union leaders, Mr. Floyd backed Mayor Bloomberg in 2009, a race that saw the incumbent win by only 4.6 points over Mr. Thompson, who was outspent 10 to 1.

Untimely Departures

But he said he regretted that decision. "He had competent people working for him, in our opinion. He had Deputy Mayor [Kevin] Sheekey and Deputy Mayor [Ed] Skyler. Who immediately said after the third term they would not stay employed by the city," Mr. Floyd said in an interview.

"There went the success of eight years of Mayor Bloomberg. We couldn't predict his whole infrastructure would leave," he continued. Replacement Deputy Mayors Robert Steel and Caswell Holloway "have not been as responsive and have not run the city as well," he continued.

Endorsing Mr. Thompson outside the union's headquarters, Mr. Floyd said his members wanted "a fair contract...and a little dignity" and that Mr. Thompson was their best hope for success. Local 237 negotiated the two-year annual 4-percent-raise deal in 2008 that set the civilian bargaining pattern, but has gone without a contract for three years.

"I don't negotiate in public and I'm not going to say what fair contract means," Mr. Floyd said. "But I will tell you I have ideas and we're going to work with the next Mayor, who will be Bill Thompson, on reducing health-care costs to the city."

Mr. Bloomberg has proposed having union members pay into their health-care plans, but without going into specifics Mr. Floyd said there are other, less-harmful ways for city employees to cut health costs.

Stuck on Bloomberg Blvd.

Negotiations between the two sides have been non-existent in recent years, he said. "There's been a my-way-or-the-highway attitude these last four years. In negotiations, you need two parties to negotiate, otherwise you just have a dictatorship."

Accepting the endorsement, Mr. Thompson concentrated his fire on the financial failures of the

Housing Authority, where Local 237 represents the majority of workers.

“It’s in disrepair,” he said. “Elevators don’t work, apartments are vacant, in need of renovation, money’s sitting on the side, and no one’s doing what they’re supposed to do. You’re doing your jobs, but the City of New York and the Housing Authority isn’t doing its jobs.

“That’s why I called for Chairman John Rhea to be fired,” he continued. “We don’t need to wait til Jan. 1; let’s get it done today and move forward. We’ve talked about reorganizing that board...let’s get rid of that bloated board and those wasted salaries.”

Got School Unions, Too

Mr. Thompson was also backed by the United Federation of Teachers and Council of School Supervisors and Administrators in the same week, adding three influential unions to his column that he did not have in 2009.

One of his most-prominent supporters then, District Council 37, has endorsed his successor as Comptroller, John C. Liu. Public Advocate Bill de Blasio was recently endorsed by Service Employees International Union Local 1199, but Local 32BJ, another massive union that represents some city workers, has yet to announce its decision, nor has Transport Workers Union Local 100.

Mr. Thompson’s campaign has been perceived as somewhat more cautious than his rivals', especially as he has been out of elected office for four years, but Mr. Floyd called that an advantage.

“He’s been studying the issues; he’s had four years to discover what’s going wrong in the city,” he said. “He’s the one person that’s been able just to focus on city government, no politics.”