

Mike & Tony
TAKE NOTE

Teamsters, Breaking Pattern, Reach Accord on City Workers

By STEVEN GREENHOUSE

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg and Teamsters Local 237 yesterday announced a tentative contract covering 8,000 city workers that differs from the pattern set by District Council 37, the largest municipal union.

Unlike the D.C. 37 contract, the deal reached by the Teamsters local does not create a permanent lesser tier of benefits for newly hired workers. Under the District Council 37 settlement reached last April, newly hired workers are to receive less vacation time, fewer holidays and fewer sick days than longtime workers.

To finance these differences, the Bloomberg administration demanded that Local 237 agree to some cost-saving measures, and the union agreed to a settlement that is four months longer than District Council 37's contract, with no raise in the final four months.

"The city wanted us to take the same package as D.C. 37," said Carroll E. Haynes, president of Local 237. "We decided early on that we wanted to do what we could to protect the unborn, to protect newly hired workers. We didn't want the unborn to bear the brunt of the give-backs. That can create real tensions within a union."

In many ways the Teamsters settlement parallels the deal signed by D.C. 37, which represents 120,000 municipal workers. Like that contract, the Teamsters deal calls for a \$1,000 lump-sum payment but no raise in the first year, and a 3 percent raise in the second year. The Teamsters deal calls for a 1.75 percent raise in the third year, compared with 2 percent for District Council 37.

In an interview, Mr. Haynes said he agreed to a smaller raise in the third year to help increase annuity contributions to \$1,275 a year from \$1,200 under the old contract. Local

237's contract expired on March 31, 2002, and the new 40-month agreement will run from April 1, 2002, through Aug. 6, 2005. He added that \$30,000 is the average salary for workers covered by the contract.

Mr. Bloomberg had insisted that the city's unions accept concessions to help finance their raises. To that end, he persuaded District Council 37 to accept not just a lower tier of benefits for new hires but also a 15 percent lower salary during new workers' first two years on the job.

Under the Teamsters contract, newly hired workers will be paid 13 percent less than other workers during their first year and 10 percent less in the second year. In their third year, their pay will become the same as other Teamsters municipal employees.

Standing next to Mr. Haynes at a City Hall news conference, Mr. Bloomberg said, "This agreement contains raises based upon produc-

tivity."

He added: "This is, I think, as fair a settlement as we could come to. The city doesn't have a lot of money, and clearly the members of this union work very hard, and it would be great to pay them as much as we can."

The Teamsters settlement covers school safety guards, taxi inspectors, security guards at municipal hospitals and food workers at the Department of Correction. The ratification vote will be by mail, with ballots counted on April 28.

Mr. Haynes predicted that other units of his local, including those representing thousands of Housing Authority workers, would accept a similar settlement.

"We did the best we could with the constraints we were working under," he said. "We were restricted by the pattern. There was very little flexibility."