

The (quick) recent history of Local 274

Who does this sound like:

- Over 80% of workers sign a petition to stay with UNITE HERE.
- They ignore the petition and subject workers to a “secret-ballot election” against their will;
- They force each worker to sit through a “captive audience meeting” before voting, where workers are told dues will skyrocket and benefits could be lost;
- They prevent shop stewards from voting or viewing the ballot for an hour once polls open;
- Once voting closes, they won’t let shop stewards see the list of who voted;
- They take the ballot box and hold it, alone in secret, for 1 hour after the last worker votes;
- They announce only 12 people voted to stay with UNITE HERE (vs. 42 to leave);
- Within 24 hours, 30 workers sign affidavits stating that they voted to stay with UNITE HERE. The results were fixed.

You might be forgiven for thinking that “they” represent management, but this is what the Philadelphia Joint Board did on April 1 to the workers at the **Radisson Warwick hotel**.

Instead of holding an open membership meeting for Local 274 to debate and vote on their future (as required by bylaws), the leadership has held tiny “drive-by elections” like this throughout the city. The International Union is conducting an investigation into allegations of systematic voter fraud. On May 18, workers testified to more voter fraud:

At the Hyatt, a vote was called 3 times, cancelled 3 times. One time, workers took matters into their own hands and voted 46-1 for UNITE HERE. Charles Clarke of the Joint Board even certified the result. But now the Joint Board won’t accept those results.

At Wachovia Center, workers were never told the results of their vote. Lynne Fox even wrote she was “unaware” of the vote and “cannot provide you any information”. Earlier in the year, workers had voted down a substandard contract. The Joint Board just held a new vote in a more distant location, with only two choices: “yes” or “strike”.

At Holiday Inn Stadium, workers testified that no vote took place, but a few ballots were just handed out.

Members at these “drive-by elections” are denied both sides of the story, and have only been told that they’ll lose their benefits unless they vote with the Joint Board. Since the hearing, we have heard similar stories from other shops. The results of such illegal elections are not binding, and are being investigated. As a result, the International Union may appoint a Trustee to oversee Local 274.



Corean Holloway, elected Vice President of Local 274 in 2007, fought against a Joint Board vote.

Local 274 was formerly a direct H.E.R.E. affiliate, representing approximately 4,000 hotel and food service workers. **Local 274 has not left UNITE HERE.** In fact, the Constitution referenced in the Local 274 bylaws explicitly states: “A local may not withdraw from UNITE HERE, go out of existence, dissolve, or join or amalgamate with a non-UNITE HERE union without the prior consent of the General Executive Board” (Article 5.7). Local 274’s bylaws can only be amended at a membership meeting, but no such meeting has occurred for years.

Local 274 is now a direct affiliate of UNITE HERE. We are building a strong, democratic, member-driven union.

