

**FRATERNAL BROTHERHOOD OF THE GARBAGE COLLECTORS  
VS  
CITY OF LAS VEGAS**

Every ten years the Fraternal Brotherhood of the Garbage Collectors (FBGC) and the city of Las Vegas meet to negotiate a new contract. The existing contract expired two days ago following a breakdown in negotiations between the City and the FBGC. As a result, FBGC workers have walked out from their jobs, while the City claims a lockout.

Historically, Las Vegas has been a notorious hotbed of mafia activity. In fact, all previous negotiations between the City and the FBGC have been held largely in the shadow of the mob. The *Cosa Nostra* had a strong financial interest in this and many other “municipal services.” It also had the ubiquitous ability to generally “coerce” parties to “make up their minds” in ways that resulted in significant Mafioso financial gains. However, due to the recent arrest of mafia kingpin, Don Cheeto Doritioni, mafia influence in city politics has been reduced greatly. This has resulted in an unprecedented scenario – the opportunity to engage in true, legal negotiations.

The previous negotiations have left the FBGC members in a difficult situation. Most commentators agree that the \$1400/month wage is not a “living wage” which can adequately support a family living in Las Vegas. The previous negotiations failed in part because FBGC members demanded a massively intricate compensation plan, with such benefits as increased salaries, fewer working-hours, a universal health care plan, a retirement fund, and observance of holidays such as Hoffa Day and International Brotherhood of World Labor Day.

The legal scene has also taken a dramatic turn. Two weeks ago, in a rare move, the President of the United States issued Executive Order #15,222. This monumental movement for labor provides that specific federal grants will be pulled if cities hire non-union workers to fill gaps created by striking labor. Already, this executive order has caused friction within the marketplace. The Association of Business Managers and other pro-business groups have banded together to challenge the constitutionality of the executive order. The case is currently in federal court in Rhode Island. Commentators say that the court could rule either way on this case.

The heat is rising, and the population of Las Vegas has begun to complain. The casinos are emptying, and people are walking around with dust masks over their faces. At times the smell is overwhelming. There are several opposition parties that are starting a “Stop the Stink in Government” campaign to drive the current leaders out of office. Both the city and the FBGC are meeting in a last ditch effort to patch together an agreement. So far, the groups have tried –and failed –to find solutions to the following problems:

- Working Hours: According to the former contract, the trash collectors work 45 hours per week. The average time on the clock for a garbage collector in the U.S. ranges between 35 and 40 hours per week. However, the number of hours differs slightly depending on the specific characteristics of the city: weather, size, tourism, etc.
- Salary. According to the former contract, the trash collectors' salary is \$1400 a month. The average salary of a garbage collector in the U.S. ranges between \$1600 and \$2000 per month.
- Healthcare. Though the Fraternal Brotherhood has never had health benefits, providing government healthcare to trash collectors is now a common practice in almost every American city. There are exceptions in Aspen, San Marino, and some of the most expensive cities in America, though those cities as a rule pay their trash collectors almost 7 times the national average as compensation.
- Vacations: The number of paid vacation days per year for an American trash collector ranges between 14 and 21. According to the former contract, the FBGC members had 28.
- Contract Duration and Increases in Salary: The duration of the former contract was ten years and contained a 2% gradual increase of the salary. This increase, however, does not reflect the significant inflation Las Vegas experienced after the casinos became legitimate. Since major corporations sidelined the mafia, the resorts and casinos have driven up prices more than 4% per year. The majority of industry in Las Vegas has not had a difficult time keeping pace as the tourism industry has ballooned to more than 10 times what it once was. But the City seems unwilling to sign a long-term contract if the increase is that high.

### **UNION'S CONFIDENTIAL FACTS**

After the recent breakdown a couple weeks ago, the Union's strike fund has dwindled to just enough to support FBGC members for perhaps another couple of weeks. On paper, your bargaining position looks excellent – you are championing a just cause. Things in Las Vegas are starting to get pretty stinky, and the people of the city are on your side. The Brotherhood has voted unanimously to authorize you to close an agreement at your discretion.

The individual families of the garbage collectors typically live in squalor in the various paltry trailer parks outside Las Vegas. Constant mafia intervention had provided for many, but since they were driven out of town, the help has dried up. Previously, many of the families could do without healthcare and high salaries, relying on mafia assistance and kickbacks from illegal loan sharking. That has changed, and the families are demanding to live like other families across the country.

The FBGC has agreed on a wage around \$1,800 a month, but is willing to go as little as \$1,600 as long as it gets healthcare and other benefits. The Brotherhood has seen the Aspen statistics and agrees that for \$12,000 a month, it would not need many other

benefits. It could afford its own private healthcare. In order to combat the runaway inflation in Las Vegas, the FBGC wants a 6% annual increase in whatever salary is secured.

Moreover, Brotherhood members are legendary loafers. They are known nationwide as the trash collectors who love their leisure; their little plastic swimming pools are prodigious, as are their hours spent in them. The more paid vacation days available, the better. If their days on are a little longer, they are willing to do that for some more time in the backyard.

Because the old framework of bargaining is in shambles after being eviscerated by the mafia, the FBGC is convinced that a longer contract is the key to establishing themselves as a legitimate union with legitimate needs. An ideal contract would be for 10 years. The FBGC has authorized a shorter contract, however, only if greater job stability and security could be assured.

However, there are problems lurking in the background. A couple of nights ago, the President of the FBGC awoke in horror – at the foot of his bed lay dozens of bags of Doritos Cool Ranch ® tortilla chips, enough to feed a horse. It seems that the mafia is not content sitting on the sidelines, and clearly wants to take back control of the lucrative garbage running rackets. The last time this happened, the results were tragic. The only hope here is to get some sort of heightened police protection, both during the negotiations, as well as to support any agreement.

It is imperative that this situation be resolved quickly. The union is running out of money, and the smell may soon be too much even for a trash collector.