

The Chief

Civil Service **LEADER**
THE CIVIL EMPLOYEES' WEEKLY

Editorial • February 23, 2007

DC 37's Spoiled Victors

It was no surprise that in the aftermath of the sweeping election victory of District Council 37 Executive Director Lillian Roberts's slate last month, those loyal to her challenger, Charles Ensley, were purged from the union's roll of committee chairmanships.

As Mr. Ensley noted after Ms. Roberts's most-prominent political ally, DC 37 President Veronica Montgomery-Costa, announced the changes, the union leader has never been much for reconciliation. And so it was to be expected that she would use the overwhelming victory, which included gaining 28 of the 29 executive board seats after not even having a majority going into the election, to reward her supporters.

Ms. Roberts and Ms. Montgomery-Costa may have overdone it a bit, as with the creation of a People Committee. (What does a People Committee do? Pay its chairman a \$9,000 stipend.) But it's clearly their show to run, and we'll see whether, minus the major opposition on the board and the constant infighting that resulted, Ms. Roberts can govern more effectively than she did for much of her first five years in office.

What might be worrisome for some DC 37 members was the latest eruption by the person regarded as most likely to succeed the 81-year-old Ms. Roberts if she retires prior to completing her new three-year term, Local 1549 President Eddie Rodriguez.

In celebrating a recent victory in a representation election for 300 employees of MetroPlus, the health maintenance organization for the Health

and Hospitals Corporation, Mr. Rodriguez chose to disparage his local's opposition in the contest, the Organization of Staff Analysts.

Where OSA Chairman Bob Croghan was gracious in defeat, saying Local 1549 won because it "did an excellent job of organizing," Mr. Rodriguez chose to trash-talk in victory.

Speaking of the MetroPlus employees, he told this newspaper's Meredith Kolodner, "They wanted a real union. OSA is not a union, it's an organization."

It's been hard to take seriously anything Mr. Rodriguez says since his remark a few years ago that the layoff of some of his HHC members was worse than what happened on 9/11. But to take a shot like that at a group whose leader, Mr. Croghan, makes up in trade-union activism what it lacks in size is really out of line.

That is especially true coming from Mr. Rodriguez, who was a member of the Local 1549 board at a time during the 1990s when it was arguably the most corrupt municipal union in the city's history. Its president, Al Diop, went to prison for both rigging a DC 37 contract vote and stealing more than a million dollars of members' dues, and several other board members were criminally convicted of thievery. We don't know what Mr. Rodriguez was doing while all that was going on, but paying attention or serving his members properly were probably not in the picture.

He owes Mr. Croghan an apology, and if Ms. Roberts is in fact regarding him as a potential successor, she ought to re-evaluate.