



## Local 372 Rips City For Not Negotiating on Layoffs

By DAVID SIMS

District Council 37 Local 372 kept the pressure on the Department of Education Sept. 7 with its second rally in two weeks against school support-staff layoffs.

Local 372 President Santos Crespo lambasted the city's plans to lay off 777 School Aides, Parent Coordinators and other support staff, challenging the notion put forward by Mayor Bloomberg's staff that the union had not offered significant savings to avert the cuts.

### **'Lying About Money Problems'**

"The Chancellor and the Mayor haven't bothered to sit down and negotiate any layoffs with us," he said outside the Tweed Courthouse. The union had its first meeting with representatives of Schools Chancellor Dennis Walcott in late August, he said.

"The issue that there's no money—that's a lie," Mr. Crespo continued. "There's lots of money! If DOE cut just 1 percent out of its total contracting cost, there'd be no reason for any layoffs."

The union is also charging that the layoffs will disproportionately hit poorer areas and communities of color. In Manhattan, school districts five and six (covering Harlem and Washington Heights) will see 74 layoffs, while the borough's other four districts will lose only 30 workers combined, according to the union's numbers.

"To pit one community against others is an atrocity," Mr. Crespo said. "What the Mayor's trying to do is set schools up for failure, then he's going to talk about bringing in charter schools."

DOE declined to respond to Mr. Crespo's assertions.

DC 37 Assistant Associate Director Henry Garrido said, "a budget is nothing more than an exercise in priorities...the Mayor cares more about high-priced consultants and computer people than he does about children."

### **Hits Mayor's 'Bizarro' Priorities**

United Federation of Teachers Secretary Michael Mendel joked that the Bloomberg administration appeared to be living in "Bizarro World," saying, "This administration won't advocate for a millionaires tax, but they will lay off the lowest-paid workers."

One of those workers, Marcelett Douglas, said in an interview that she had just received a letter from the DOE warning her that she could lose her job next month. Currently excessed and looking for work because her former school, M.S. 317, had been closed, she was worried that if she took a job out of her district, she would get laid off because switching districts means a loss of seniority status.

"I barely make \$20,000 a year, and I'm a single mother," she said. "Unemployment is already through the roof; why in the world would they add to the unemployment of this city?"

Mr. Crespo said the union, following a Sept. 9 meeting with DOE officials, would meet with Office of Labor Relations higher-ups on Sept. 15.