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YEAR IN REVIEW: Top labor stories of 2011

By DON McINTOSH
Associate Editor

2011 was Year Three of the Great Recession, but it may be remembered as Year One of the Great Fightback by working people.

On Feb. 15 — four days after peaceful demonstrations in Cairo toppled a dictator — an America uprising began, with mass protests at state capitols, starting in Madison, Wisconsin. On Sept. 17, the movement re-erupted, with an “Occupy Wall Street” protest in New York City that within two weeks had spread worldwide.

If the mood is surlier than ever, it may be because the economy isn’t working out for working people. In the United States, official unemployment was at 8.6 percent in November, down just 1.2 percentage points from a year before. Bankers binged on mortgage-backed securities, but workers have suffered the resulting hangover.

Continued U.S. joblessness is also brought on by a long-term offshoring of production. America’s trade deficit was topping \$540 billion by year’s end — \$40 billion more than 2010 — and polls say a majority of Americans think U.S. trade policy is broken. But Congress ratified three more NAFTA-style trade deals in October — with Korea, Panama, and Colombia. The treaties, negotiated in the Bush years, were pushed to a vote by President Obama.

Meanwhile, wages are stagnant, regular unleaded is selling for \$3.25 a gallon, and health care is more expensive



The “Spirit of Wisconsin” spread nationally, including this rally in Portland on Feb. 25, as workers fought to maintain their right to collective bargaining.

than ever: Average annual premiums for employer-provided full family health insurance passed the \$15,000 mark in 2011.

Still, for organized labor, 2011 was a vindication. In Wisconsin, teachers struck, Democratic legislators fled, and crowds of up to 100,000 turned out — all to oppose a Republican governor’s plan to strip public workers of their union rights. “Collective bargaining” might have seemed an unlikely cause a year before, but by the end of February, pollsters were finding that 77 percent of Americans think public employees should have the same union rights as

private sector workers. In a matter of weeks, the “Spirit of Wisconsin” spread to every state capitol, as Americans, mostly nonunion, turned out in solidarity with beleaguered unionists under the slogan “We are One” and “We are all Wisconsin.”

By late October, “I am the 99 percent” had replaced those slogans as the mantra of a popular movement, and even tiny Mosier, Oregon, population 421, had an “occupation.” Campers around the country were mostly routed by local police, but participants demonstrated a new appetite for disrupting
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Some of the more than three dozen volunteers at the Presents for Partners holiday party included from left to right: NOLC secretary Karen Carlson, LCSA Executive Director Vickie Burns, Santa Claus (played by Dave Williams of IBEW Local 48), Gina Whitlow of the IBEW and United Workers Federal Credit Union, and Thea Stayton and Becky Wright of the Portland Federation of School Professionals Local 111. The kids are Stirling and Vida Walker.

Labor’s ‘Presents from Partners’ brightens the holidays for hundreds

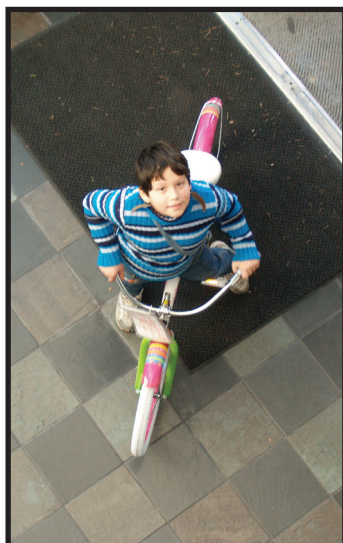
Labor’s Community Service Agency (LCSA) and the Northwest Oregon Labor Council held their annual “Presents from Partners” holiday party for children of out-of-work union members Dec. 17 at the Sheet Metal Workers union hall in Northeast Portland.

More than 300 kids — boys, girls, tweens, teens, and toddlers — participated, with each receiving four toys each, including some bicycles. Families also enjoyed a catered lunch and pictures with Santa Claus.

Union organizations, members, unionized businesses and professionals that work with unions donated toys and cash for the event, said LCSA Executive Director Vickie Burns.

“The outpouring of support this holiday season was a gift from and for working people and organized labor,” Burns said. “It was a display of solidarity, an inspiration, and a resounding success.”

Leftover toys were donated to Toy & Joy and went to out-of-work military families. Those arrangements were made through LCSA’s contacts with Hire Oregon Vets and Oregon National Guard.



Mayda Mosqueda, 8, gets ready to ride off on her new bicycle. She is the daughter of Javier Mosqueda, a member of Glass Workers Local 740.

AFL-CIO supports Bonamici in CD #1

Votes for early endorsement of Brad Avakian for labor commissioner

Suzanne Bonamici, Democratic nominee in the special election congressional race in Oregon’s 1st District, has added several labor organizations to her list of endorsers. The special election to succeed Democrat David Wu, who resigned mid-term, is Jan. 31.

Her opponent is tea party Republican Rob Cornilles.

Bonamici’s latest labor endorsement came Dec. 16 from the Oregon AFL-CIO Committee on Political Education (COPE). The state labor federation represents over 225,000 workers in Oregon, with 15,000 affiliated union members in the 1st District.

Bonamici, a state senator from Beaverton, was the top vote-getter in a special primary election held last month. Her primary opponents were State Rep. Brad Witt and Labor Com-

missioner Brad Avakian. Witt is a former secretary-treasurer of the Oregon AFL-CIO and current union rep for United Food and Commercial Workers Local 555. Both Brads have since endorsed Bonamici.

AFL-CIO unions backing Bonamici include the Oregon State Fire Fighters Council; Oregon Nurses Association; Oregon School Employees Association (OSEA)-American Federation of Teachers (AFT); Oregon AF-SCME Council 75; OSEA-AFT Local

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Rockin' the house for Doernbecher

Unions for Kids got an early start on its 10th annual fundraiser for Doernbecher Children's Hospital with a performance Dec. 13 by Norman Sylvester and his band at the Original Roadhouse Grill in Gresham (standing above with vocalist Sarah Billings). Sylvester, a member of Musicians Local 99, played pro bono and the restaurant donated 20 percent of the night's proceeds to the cause. "When Norman found out that our group was all volunteer to benefit the kids at Doernbecher, he wouldn't accept payment," said Lee Duncan, a member of IBEW Local 48 and president of the non-profit Unions for Kids. The fundraiser itself is a motorcycle poker run and motorcycle raffle. Last year's event raised \$50,000. Since its inception, Unions for Kids has contributed \$271,000 to Doernbecher. This year's poker run is scheduled for June 9 at IBEW Local 48's hall in Northeast Portland. Tickets are now on sale for a chance to win a "Big Blue" 2012 Heritage Softail Classic Harley-Davidson. In celebration of the 10th anniversary, the motorcycle will be autographed

by Willie G. Davidson, the grandson of Harley-Davidson co-founder William A. Davidson and the company's senior vice president and chief styling officer. Tickets are \$10 each, with only 5,000 sold. Tickets are now available at IBEW and United Workers Federal Credit Union, 9955 SE Washington St., Portland; Teamsters Council #37 Federal Credit Union, 1020 NE 2nd Ave., Suite 160, Portland, and IBEW Local 48, 15937 NE Airport Way, Portland.

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Lansing re-elected to top post at Bakers Local 114

Terry Lansing has been re-elected to a third term as financial secretary-treasurer of Portland-based Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco and Grain Millers (BCTGM) Local 114. He ran unopposed.



TERRY LANSING

Lansing, 61, is a 35-year member of the local, joining in 1976 after taking a job at Williams Bakery. He served as a trustee and on the Executive Board before being hired as an assistant business agent in 1990 by then-secretary-treasurer Noel Johnson. Lansing met Johnson while trying to organize his nonunion employer Smith Baking in Salem.

In 1992 Lansing was elected business agent following the retirement of Don Schoen. He was elected financial secretary-treasurer in 2005, succeeding Laurel Koch, who retired.

Lansing currently is chair of the Oregon Bakers Union Trust and a trustee on the Western Conference of the BCTGM. He's president of the Northwest Joint Council of the BCTGM, and he sits on the executive boards of the Northwest Oregon Labor Council and

Labor's Community Service Agency.

Also re-elected by acclamation at Local 114 were President Georgene Barragan of Bimbo Bakery/Oroweat; Vice President Darren Hamann of Kroger Clackamas Bakery; Recording Secretary Robert Fenske of Kroger Clackamas Bakery; and Business Agent Shad Clark. Clark was appointed business agent in 2009 to fill the unexpired term of Gene Beaudoin, who retired.

Elected as trustees were Andrew Stern of Bimbo Bakery/Oroweat, along with incumbents Mike Connelly of Rosauer's Supermarket and Mario Al-daco of Franz Bakery Portland.

Ten members ran for eight seats on the local's Executive Board. Top vote getters were incumbents Beaudoin; Alejandro Ahumada of Franz Bakery Portland; Brian DeVall of Kroger Clackamas Bakery; Armando Zavala of Bimbo Bakery/Oroweat; Linda Alton of Albertsons; and Randy Roark of Kroger Clackamas Bakery. New to the board are Lisa Fox of Bimbo Bakery/Oroweat and Jeff Singleton of Franz Bakery Springfield.

Mail ballots were counted Dec. 13. All officers and board members will be installed at the next union meeting Jan. 24. All terms are for three years.

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TriMet uses its public e-mail list to score points against union

A government agency e-mails the public to say its employee compensation is out-of-line

By **DON McINTOSH**
Associate Editor

TriMet, the Portland-area public transit district, has a well-developed Internet presence: Online users can plan trips, see when buses are coming, and sign up for e-mail updates.

But now it seems the agency is using its public e-mail list to bash its union — Amalgamated Transit Union Local 757. A Dec. 15 e-mail, sent to over 20,000 subscribing members of the public, drew readers in with its subject line: “Budget Discussion Guide now online – we want your feedback!”

“Tough budget choices are ahead,” explained the unsigned email from TriMet, “and we want to know what’s most important to you when it comes to service on the street and the price you pay to ride.”

It sounds like a public agency seeking public input, right? But click through, and TriMet explains that the projected \$12-17 million budget shortfall is brought on by lower payroll revenues, likely federal funding cuts ... and because “negotiations with the transit union over health care benefits and other cost-cutting measures are at an impasse.”

“The current trend in the cost of wages and benefits for represented (union) employees is unsustainable,” TriMet declares. “A recent Employment Relations Board decision removed certain cost-saving proposals from our final labor contract offer, so some measures we were hoping to implement—such as bringing wage and health care costs under control—likely will have to wait for a future negotiation.”

TriMet doesn’t explain, but the Employment Relations Board (ERB) is a state agency that administers Oregon’s public employee collective bargaining law. In September, ERB determined that TriMet broke state labor law — when it sent a different “final offer” to arbitration than the real final offer it had made to the union in bargaining.

That contract is heading for binding arbitration, which TriMet calls “a forum in which it is extremely difficult to make significant changes no matter how out-of-line union wages and benefits are.”

To sum up: TriMet asks for public input on service cuts and fare increases, and then uses that as an opportunity to tell the public its own union employees’ wages and benefits are “unsustainable,” out of control, and “out-of-line.”

There’s more. Click on “Tell us what you think,” and that leads to “Common Questions” like “Why not just cut pay and benefits for employees like everyone else has?” The answer, says TriMet, is that 87 percent of its employees are in the union, and TriMet can’t unilaterally change their wages and benefits. “Union leadership has refused to consider reasonable changes to wage



increases and benefits that would bring them more in line with other transit/government workers,” TriMet continues. “ATU has also been successful in its legal maneuvers to delay or exclude arbitration on TriMet’s cost-saving wage and benefit proposals.”

TriMet spokesperson Mary Fetch told the Labor Press that the e-mail had over 800 responses in the first day. She offered no support for the contention that TriMet wages are out of line, but said

health benefits — which TriMet provides for union members and their dependents — cost \$16,000 a year.

The budget discussion will continue with public meetings in February.

TriMet operates bus and light rail service in Multnomah, Clackamas, and Washington counties. It’s funded by fares and local payroll taxes, and is governed by a seven-member board appointed by the governor.



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PHOTOSTOCK

Four unions endorse Novick, Nolan for seats on Portland City Council

No action yet in mayor's race

Two candidates running for Portland City Council have picked up early endorsements from four union locals.

In a joint announcement Dec. 15 in front of City Hall, leaders of Portland Fire Fighters Local 43, the Portland Police Association (PPA), the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 48, and the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 8, endorsed Steve Novick and Mary Nolan for city council.

Novick is running for an open seat being vacated by former Fire Fighters union president Randy Leonard.

Nolan is leaving the Oregon House of Representatives to challenge incumbent Amanda Fritz, who is a member

of the Oregon Nurses Association.

All but the ILWU represent employees at the city.

"We endorse these people because we want to get the City of Portland back looking at jobs," said Joe Esmonde, a business agent for IBEW Local 48. "We need to have a middle class that is strong, which is important to pay those taxes. We know these candidates will be there for us and help our members get back to work."

Daryl Turner, president of the PPA, said the two endorsed candidates "are innovators who think outside the box to solve difficult and complex problems."

Fire Fighters President Jim Forquer said his union and the PPA also have endorsed Rod Underhill for Multnomah County district attorney. Underhill, a chief deputy district attorney for Multnomah County, is seeking to replace his boss, Michael Schruck, who

is retiring after 31 years as DA.

Forquer said labor wasn't ready to endorse any of the candidates running for mayor.

Labor-backed incumbent Sam Adams is not seeking re-election, and several people have filed to succeed him. The front-runners are businesswoman Eileen Brady, former city commissioner Charlie Hales, and State Rep. Jefferson Smith.

"At this time, our members don't feel comfortable making an endorsement," Forquer said. "We're anxious to continue the conversations with all of the candidates for the mayor's race, and we look forward to more information from them."

Asked by reporters if the Fire Fighters Union might consider endorsing a yet unannounced candidate for mayor, Forquer responded that the union would give thought to anybody at this point.

...Oregon AFL-CIO political endorsements

(From Page 1)

6732; and Fire Fighter locals from Tualatin Valley, Newberg, Forest Grove, Cornelius, Scappoose, Clatskanie, and Washington County District 2.

United Food and Commercial Workers Local 555, an affiliate of the Change to Win labor federation, endorsed Bonamici, as did the independent Oregon Education Association. Local 555 represents approximately 2,000 members in the 1st District.

At the Dec. 16 COPE meeting, the Oregon AFL-CIO issued an early endorsement for Avakian, who now is running for re-election as labor commissioner. Avakian is being challenged by Republican State Sen. Bruce Starr. The labor commissioner's post is non-

partisan, so if any candidate captures over 50 percent of the vote in the May primary, they will be declared the winner and will not be on the November general election ballot.

COPE delegates also voted to endorse the re-election of Secretary of State Kate Brown. The endorsement was contingent upon her completing a satisfactory questionnaire, which all political candidates are asked to do.

Additionally, the Oregon AFL-CIO endorsed Jennifer Williamson for an open seat in House District 36, and Ben Unger in House District 29. Both are Democrats. HD 36 is being vacated by Mary Nolan, a Democrat running for Portland City Council. HD 29 is held by first-term Republican Katie Eyre.

Another Democrat, Katie Riley, also has filed for the race. She lost to Eyre in 2010.

Delegates unanimously opposed Initiative Petition 3, which currently is gathering signatures in order to qualify for the November 2012 ballot. The anti-union initiative seeks to bar public employers from collecting union dues if any part goes toward political activities. Dubbed "paycheck deception" by labor, delegates amended the motion to include any initiatives involving paycheck deception, as several versions have been filed with the secretary of state.

The AFL-CIO will consider more endorsements when it meets again in early March.

IN MEMORIAM

MELVIN "PETE" OSCAR PETERSON, a former president and union rep for Bakers Local 364, passed away Dec. 5 — 16 days shy of his 84th birthday.



Peterson worked at Nabisco in Portland for 36 years and was a 62-year member of Local 364.

He took a break from his bakery job for two years (1950-52) to serve in the Army during the Korean Conflict.

He left Nabisco in 1985 to go to work for the union. He retired in 1989.

Peterson served as president of the local for 20 years.

Peterson was born in Genesee Township, Minnesota on Dec. 21, 1927.

He married Gladys Madeline Babcock in 1972. The couple was married for 30 years and traveled around the world. They had no children. She passed away May 2, 2002.

Peterson left portions of his estate to Doernbecher Children's Hospital, Providence Child Center, Ronald McDonald House, and Guide Dogs for the Blind, Inc.

Funeral arrangements were handled by Gateway Little Chapel of the Chimes.

Minimum wage goes up in Oregon, Washington

Oregon's minimum wage increased by 30 cents to \$8.80 an hour on New Year's Day, while in the state of Washington, minimum pay jumped by 37 cents to \$9.04 an hour.

Oregon and Washington are among 10 states that peg the wage floor to inflation. The others are Vermont, Ohio, Nevada, Montana, Missouri, Florida, Colorado, and Arizona.

According to the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries, the 30-cent increase in Oregon mirrors a 3.77 percent increase as measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for the previous 12 months. CPI, published by the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, is a measure of the average change in prices over time for a fixed "market basket" of goods and services, such as food, shelter, medical care, transportation fares, and other goods and services people purchase for day-to-day living.

"Safeguarding the wages of low-in-

come workers is especially critical in a tough economy," said Oregon Labor Commissioner Brad Avakian. "Oregon's economy will not rebound if we allow 144,538 minimum wage earners to fall behind inflation."

Washington's minimum wage rate is the highest in the nation. However, a few cities have their own laws covering minimum pay. For instance, San Francisco's minimum wage increased to \$10.24 an hour on Jan. 1, making it the first city in the nation to top a \$10 minimum wage.

New hourly wage rates for 2012 are: \$8.46 in Vermont; \$7.70 in Ohio; \$7.65 in Montana; \$7.67 in Florida; \$7.64 in Colorado; \$7.65 in Arizona; and \$8.25 in Nevada for those without employer-provided health insurance, \$7.25 with insurance provided. Missouri opted for no change this year and will remain at \$7.25 an hour.

The federal minimum wage is \$7.25.



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NLRB again postpones requirement for displaying employee rights poster

For the second time, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) has postponed the implementation date for its new rule requiring all private-sector employers to display an 11-by-17-inch poster informing workers of their rights under the National Labor Relations Act, including the right to unionize.

The rule originally was set to take effect on Nov. 14, 2011. However, the NLRB pushed it back to Jan. 31, 2012, "in order to allow for enhanced education and outreach to employers, particularly small and medium sized businesses."

Late last month the NLRB set a new implementation date of April 30, 2012. This time, the federal agency said in a statement that "postponing the effective date of the rule would facilitate the resolution of the legal challenges that have been filed with respect to the rule."

As reported in the Sept. 2 Labor Day edition of the Northwest Labor Press, the business world flipped out after the NLRB issued the proposal, claiming the federal agency was unfairly promoting unionization. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce went so far as to file a lawsuit seeking to block it, maintaining the rule violates federal labor and regulatory laws, as well as First Amendment Rights.

The posters, which would be distributed free of charge, are similar to ones the U.S. Department of Labor requires thousands of federal contractors to post.

"Just as employers are required to

notify their employees of their rights around health and safety, wages and discrimination on the job, this rule gives clear information to employees about their rights under this fundamental labor law so that workers are better equipped to exercise and enforce them," said AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka.

Since establishing the new regulation, NLRB Chairwoman Wilma Liebman departed after her term expired in August, and Craig Becker's recess appointment expired at the end of 2011. A Senate GOP filibuster blocked a permanent seat for Becker, who was general counsel for the Service Employees International Union.

Another seat has been vacant for several years, as Senate Republicans have threatened to block all nominees presented by President Barack Obama.

The two holdovers on the NLRB are Republican Brian Hayes and Chairman Mark Pearce, a Democrat.

At full strength, the Board is supposed to have five members. It needs at least three to conduct any business.

Obama's latest nominees are Operating Engineers General Counsel Richard Griffin and Labor Department official Sharon Black. Black, now deputy assistant labor secretary for congressional affairs, was labor counsel from 2005-09 for the late Senate Labor Committee Chairman Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.), after seven years in top staff attorney posts at the NLRB. Griffin joined the Operating

Engineers' legal department in 1983, and has been its general counsel for the last 17 years. He too was an NLRB staff attorney, from 1981-83.

U.S. Sen. Lindsay Graham (R-S.C.), said he will place "an indefinite hold" on Black and Griffin.

Graham alleges the NLRB collaborated with the Machinists Union in the recent, now-ended, labor law-breaking complaint the agency filed against Boeing. The agency's acting general counsel had to bring the charge after Boeing execs openly said they moved 787 production to anti-union South Carolina to retaliate against the Machinists for standing up for their rights. Such retaliation breaks U.S. labor law.

Many union officials believe Republicans are purposely refusing to confirm anyone put before them in order to render the NLRB inoperable.

Graham confirmed that theory, stating that "Given its recent actions, the NLRB as inoperable could be considered progress."

According to the group American Rights at Work, Congressional Republicans have made nearly 50 separate assaults on the NLRB since January 2011 by holding hearings, issuing subpoenas, and proposing bills to gut the agency's funding.

In November, House Republicans approved a bill that gives employers new tools to combat and delay elections by workers who try to form unions. It has not been taken up by the Senate.



John Walsh (center wearing baseball cap) was part of a Witness for Peace delegation that toured Colombia last November following passage of the Colombia Free Trade Agreement with the United States. Above he listens to stories from labor activists and their families at a demonstration.

Labor rights in Colombia — rhetoric vs. reality

By JOHN WALSH

Before the U.S. Congress passed the free trade agreement with Colombia, U.S. President Barack Obama and Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos announced their "labor action plan" to mitigate some of the worst abuses of labor rights in the Latin American nation that consistently experiences more murders of unionists than anyplace else in the world. What is the reality today?

As part of a delegation conducted by Witness for Peace, three activists from Portland, myself included, met with Colombian workers in the automotive, sugar, and port sectors. We spoke with officials of established unions and with leaders of groups of workers seeking to form unions.

The AFL-CIO Solidarity Center's representative in Colombia shared his perspective with us. Colombian human rights groups and representatives of the indigenous and Afro-Colombian populations told us of their experiences.

Workers continue to suffer indirect and contingent employment. Cosmetic changes have occurred in some cases as a facade of compliance with the labor action plan — the structures used to subcontract hiring have changed their names — but workers still lack job security, health and retirement benefits, and organizing rights. Those who suffer occupational injury or illness are cast aside without compensation or support. Threats against the lives of labor leaders continue, and happened while we were in Colombia. Employers continue to use sham "collective pacts" to pre-empt genuine unions.

More specifically:

- 164 auto workers injured on the job and dumped by GM have maintained an encampment occupying the curb across the street from the U.S. embassy for 125 days (as of Dec. 1), seeking recognition of their injuries and their union; the company coerces injured workers into quitting, withholds their medical documentation, and uses a col-

lective pact to block workers from organizing.

- Sugar cane cutters who struck in 2008 still await a verdict in the trial of their leaders on dubious charges made against them by management informants, including an informant already discredited by the Colombian Supreme Court when he made similar allegations against a sitting senator; meanwhile the cane cutters petition the Minister of Labor for official recognition of their union.

- Workers in the thriving port sector live in poverty and make around \$10 a day without job security; since Colombian ports were privatized, development benefits wealthy insiders rather than the public.

Notwithstanding the obstacles and threats, Colombian social movements know how to organize. University students, through mass marches and occupations nationwide, succeeded in compelling the government to withdraw legislation that would have encouraged the privatization of higher education. The unarmed indigenous guard protects the rights of their communities against the advanced weaponry of both the army and the guerrillas.

We can help working people in Colombia win more fights by insisting, at a minimum, that the commitments of the labor action plan be honored not only in word but in deed before the free trade agreement goes into effect.

In a globalized economy ruled by transnational corporations, if we fail to stop the abuses Colombian workers experience today, we can expect to suffer the same treatment ourselves in the future.

(Editor's Note: John Walsh is a member of Teamsters Local 767M, Graphic Communications Conference, in Portland.)

The Oregon AFL-CIO Executive Board on Dec. 16 voted to send a letter of support to sugar cane workers on trial for leading a strike in 2008.)



James Coon



Raymond Thomas



Cynthia Newton



Chris Frost



Cheryl Coon



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Official Notices

AUTO MECHANIC 1005

Executive Board meets Wednesday, Jan. 18, at 4:30 p.m.

Members meet 10 a.m. Saturday Jan. 21, preceded by a 9 a.m. shop steward training class. Shop stewards must attend training class and regular meeting to be compensated.

Congratulations to Eric Cochenour, winner of the Remington shotgun raffle. The winner of the TV raffle will be announced at the Jan. 21 meeting.

All meetings and elections are held at our Union Hall, 25 Cornell, Gladstone.

PLEASE NOTE: Rochelle Conrad will be available from 8 a.m. to noon during the regular lodge meeting to answer any questions you have concerning health, welfare and pension plans.

BAKERY, CONFECTIONERY, TOBACCO WORKERS AND GRAIN MILLERS 114

Executive Board meets 8:30 a.m. Tuesday, Jan. 24, at 7931 NE Halsey, Suite 201, Portland. **PLEASE NOTE TIME CHANGE.**

BOILERMAKERS 500

Members meet 10 a.m. Saturday, Jan. 14, at 2515 NE Columbia Blvd., Portland.

BRICKLAYERS AND ALLIED CRAFTWORKERS 1

Members meet 7 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 17, at 12812 NE Marx St., Portland.

CEMENT MASONS 555

Members meet 7 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 19, at 12812 NE Marx St., Portland.

CENTRAL OREGON LABOR COUNCIL

Delegates meet 5:30 p.m. Monday, Jan. 30, at UA 290 Training Center, 2161 SE 1st St., Redmond.

COLUMBIA-PACIFIC BUILDING TRADES

Delegates meet 10 a.m. Tuesdays, Jan. 10 and Jan. 17, at Kirkland Union Manor II, 3535 SE 86th, Portland.

ELECTRICAL WORKERS 48

Electrical Workers Minority Caucus meets 5:30 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 10, in the Executive Boardroom.

Residential Unit meets 6 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 11, in the Dispatch Lobby

Sound and Communication Unit meets 6 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 11, in the Meeting Hall.

Wasco Unit meets 6 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 11, at Northern Wasco County PUD, 2345 River Road, The Dalles.

Coast Unit meets 7 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 12, at Astoria Labor Temple, 926 Duane St., Astoria.

Washington Unit meets 5:30 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 12, at Round Table Pizza, 5016 NE Thurston, Vancouver.

Bylaws Committee meets 5:30 p.m. Monday, Jan. 16, in the Executive Boardroom.

Executive Board meets 6:30 p.m. Wednesdays, Jan. 18 and Feb. 1, in the Executive Boardroom.

Women of 48 meets 5 p.m. Friday, Jan. 20, at Radio Room, 1101 NE Alberta, Portland.

Marine Unit meets 5 p.m. Monday, Jan. 23, in the Meeting Hall.

General Membership Meeting meets 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 25 in the Meeting Hall. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. for sandwiches.

Your Business Manager Meeting, Jan. 28, in the Meeting Hall. Call Nancy at 503-251-9681 for appointment.

Meetings are at 15937 NE Airport Way, Portland, unless otherwise noted.

DEATH ASSESSMENTS: No 2291, Glen A. Hansen; and No. 2292, Earl Waldram. The January 2012 assessment is \$1.50

ELEVATOR CONSTRUCTORS 23

Members meet 6 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 12, preceded by a 5:30 p.m. Executive Board meeting, at 12779 NE Whitaker Way, Portland.

FIRE FIGHTERS 452

Members meet 6 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 1, at 2807 NW Fruit Valley Rd., Vancouver, Wash.

FIRE FIGHTERS 1660

Members meet 8 a.m. Thursday, Jan. 12, at 4411 SW Sunset Dr., Lake Oswego.

GLASS WORKERS 740

Eugene area members meet 5 p.m. Monday, Jan. 9, at Best Western Grand Manor Inn, 971 Kruse Way, Springfield.

Salem area members meet 5 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 10, at Candalaria Terrace, Suite 204, 2659 Commercial St. SE, Salem.

INSULATORS 36

Executive Board meets 6 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 11. Members meet 7 p.m. Friday, Jan. 13.

Meetings are at 11145 NE Sandy Blvd., Portland.

IRON WORKERS 29

Members meet 7 p.m., Thursday, Feb. 2, preceded by a 5:30 p.m. Executive Board meeting, at 11620 NE Ainsworth Cir., #200, Portland.

IRON WORKERS SHOPMEN 516

Executive Board meets 6 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 12. Members meet 6 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 26.

Meeting are at 11620 NE Ainsworth Cir., #300, Portland.

LABORERS 320

Members meet 7 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 12, at Joe Edgar Hall, Teamsters' Complex, 1850 NE 162nd Ave., Portland.

LABORERS/VANCOUVER 335

Members meet 7 p.m. Monday, Jan. 9, preceded by a 6:15 p.m. Executive Board meeting, at the Vancouver Labor Center, 2212 NE Andresen Rd., Vanc., Wash.

PLEASE NOTE DATE CHANGE.

LABORERS 483

Members meet 5:30 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 17, at the Musicians Hall, 325 NE 20th Ave., Portland.

LANE COUNTY LABOR COUNCIL

Delegates meet 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 25, at 1116 South A St., Springfield.

LANE, COOS, CURRY & DOUGLAS BUILDING TRADES

Delegates meet at noon Wednesday, Jan. 25, at the Springfield Training Center, 2861 Pierce Pkwy., Springfield.

LINN-BENTON-LINCOLN LABOR COUNCIL

Delegates meet 7 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 1, preceded by a 6:30 p.m. Executive Board meeting, at 1400 Salem Ave., Albany.

LINOLEUM LAYERS 1236

Portland area members meet 6 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 26, at 11105 NE Sandy Blvd., Portland.

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"The rich are getting richer and the poor poorer. Raising your salary would mess things up, Sims."

MACHINISTS 63

Executive Board meets 4 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 11. Members meet 10 a.m. Saturday, Jan. 14, preceded by a 9 a.m. stewards' meeting.

PLEASE NOTE: Nominations for Secretary/Treasurer and Vice President positions will be held at this meeting. Elections will be held in February, if needed.

Meetings are at 25 Cornell, Gladstone.

MACHINISTS 1432

Swing and graveyard shift members meet at 11 a.m. Monday, Jan. 9.

Regular membership meets 6 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 11.

Shop stewards' training session 9 a.m. Saturday, Jan. 21.

Meetings are at 25 Cornell, Gladstone.

MARION-POLK-YAMHILL LABOR COUNCIL

Executive Board meets 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 10, followed by a 7 p.m. general meeting at 2110 State St., Salem.

Salem.

METAL TRADES COUNCIL

Executive Board meets 10 a.m. Thursday, Jan. 12. Delegates meet 5 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 24.

Meetings are at the IBEW Local 48 Hall, 15937 NE Airport Way, Portland.

MID-COLUMBIA LABOR COUNCIL

Delegates meet 7 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 10, at 3313 W. 2nd, The Dalles.

MOLDERS 139B

Members meet 6:30 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 19, preceded by a 6 p.m. Executive Board meeting at the Carpenters Hall, 2205 N. Lombard, Portland.

NORTHWEST OREGON LABOR COUNCIL

Delegates meet 7 p.m. Monday, Jan. 23, at IBEW Lo-

cal 48 Hall, 15937 NE Airport Way, Portland.

PAINTERS & DRYWALL FINISHERS 10

Members meet 6 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 18, at 11145 NE Sandy Blvd., Portland.

www.iupatlocal10.org.

PLASTERERS 82

Members meet 5 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 1, at 12812 NE Marx St., Portland.

PORTLAND CITY & METROPOLITAN EMPLOYEES 189

Executive Board meets 6:15 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 10. General membership meets 6:15 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 24.

Meetings are at 6025 E. Burnside St., Portland.

ROOFERS & WATERPROOFERS 49

Members meet 7 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 12. Executive Board meets 7 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 2.

Meetings are at 5032 SE 26th Ave, Portland. (Phone: 503 232-4807)

SALEM BCTC

Delegates meet 10 a.m. Thursday, Feb. 2, at the IBEW 280 Training Center, 33309 Hwy 99E, Tangent.

SHEET METAL WORKERS 16

Portland members meet 6 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 10, at the Sheet Metal Training Center, 2379 NE 178th Ave., Portland.

Medford area members meet 4 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 11, at Wild River Pizza, 2684 N. Pacific Hwy., Medford.

Eugene area members meet 6 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 12, at the Sheet Metal Local 16 Hall, 1887 Laura St., Springfield.

Coos Bay area members meet 4 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 19, at Abby's Pizza, 997 First St., Coos Bay.

Portland area VOC meets 6 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 1, at the Sheet Metal Training Center, 2379 NE 178th Ave., Portland.

SIGN PAINTERS & PAINT MAKERS 1094

Members meet 3:30 p.m. Monday, Jan. 16, in the District Office, at 11105 NE Sandy Blvd., Portland.

SOUTHERN OREGON CENTRAL LABOR COUNCIL

Delegates meet 6 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 10, at the Labor Temple, 4480 Rogue Valley Hwy. #3, Central Point.

SOUTHWESTERN OREGON CENTRAL LABOR COUNCIL

Delegates meet 6 p.m. Monday, Jan. 9, at the Bay Area Labor Center, 3427 Ash, North Bend. **PLEASE NOTE DATE CHANGE.**

SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON CENTRAL LABOR COUNCIL

Delegates meet 6 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 26, preceded by an Executive Board meeting, at the ILWU Local 4 Hall, 1205 Ingalls St., Vancouver, Wash.

UNITED ASSOCIATION 290

Portland area members meet 7:30 p.m. Friday, Jan. 20, at 20210 SW Teton Ave., Tualatin.

Astoria area members meet 6 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 26, at the Astoria Labor Temple, 926 Duane St., Astoria.

Bend area members meet 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 24, at the Local 290 Training Center, 2161 SW First, Redmond.

Brookings area members meet 5:30 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 31, at Curry County Search and Rescue, 517 Railroad St., Brookings.

Coos Bay area members meet 6 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 24, at the Coos Bay Training Center, 2nd & Kruse, Coos Bay.

Eugene area members meet 6:30 p.m. Monday, Jan. 23, at the Springfield Training Center, 2861 Pierce Parkway, Springfield.

Medford area members meet 6 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 26, at 950 Industrial Circle, White City.

Salem area members meet 6 p.m. Monday, Jan. 23, at 1810 Hawthorne Ave. NE, Salem.

Humboldt-Del Norte Co. area members meet 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 25, at the Eureka Training Center, 832 E St., Eureka, Calif.

UNITED STEELWORKERS 1097

Members meet 4 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 18, preceded by a 3 p.m. Executive Board meeting, in the union office building, 91237 Old Mill Town Rd., Westport.

Retiree Meeting Notices

ALLIANCE FOR RETIRED AMERICANS OREGON CHAPTER

Executive Board meets 10 a.m.

Thursday, Jan. 12, followed by an 11 a.m. General Membership meeting, in the Northwest Oregon Labor Council board room, at 1125 SE Madison, Portland.

All retirees are welcome to attend.

ELECTRICAL WORKERS 48

Retired Electricians of Local 48, wives and friends meet 11:30 a.m.

Tuesday, Jan. 10 at The Old Spaghetti Factory, 12725 SE 93rd, Clackamas. For more info, please call Glenn Hodgkinson at 503 656-0028.

ELEVATOR CONSTRUCTORS 23

Retirees meet noon Tuesday, Jan. 10, at Westmoreland Union Manor,

604 SE 23rd Ave., Portland.

INSULATORS 36

Retiree breakfast 9 a.m. Thursday, Feb. 2, at the Dockside Restaurant, 2047 NW Front Ave., Portland.

IRON WORKERS 29

Retirees meet 12 noon Wednesday, Jan. 11, at 11620 NE Ainsworth Cir., Portland for a catered lunch.

NORTHWEST OREGON LABOR RETIREES COUNCIL

Business meeting from 10 a.m. to noon, Monday, Jan. 9, in the conference room of Labor's Community Service Agency, 1125 SE Madison #103B, Portland.

SHEET METAL WORKERS 16

Retirees meet 11:30 a.m. Thursday, Jan. 12, at Nicolas Restaurant, 4082 N. Lombard, Portland.

OREGON AFSCME

Retirees meet 10 a.m. Tuesday, Jan. 17 at the AFSCME office, 6025 E. Burnside, Portland. Call Michael Arken for information at 1-800-521-5954 ext. 226.

UNITED ASSOCIATION 290

Retirees meet 10 a.m. Thursday, Jan. 19, at 20210 SW Teton Ave., Tualatin.

Salem Retirees meet 12 noon Wednesday, Jan. 11, at Almost Home Restaurant, 3310 Market St., NE, Salem.



Thank you, Senator Merkley

In a special holiday gesture, staff from Working America delivered 100 “thank you” letters Dec. 20 to U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-Oregon) expressing appreciation for his votes against three free trade agreements. The letters were penned by Working America members from Beaverton and Portland. In a statement, Working America said that at a time when corporations are shipping jobs overseas and domestic jobs have an average of nearly five applicants per opening, Working America’s 150,000 Oregon members look to their elected leaders to protect American working families. In rejecting the free trade agreements, Sen. Merkley stood up for the middle class and the local economy. Unfortunately, all three trade deals received majority votes. Working America is a community affiliate of the AFL-CIO, with three million members nationwide. Standing on the far right is Ed Hall, Merkley’s labor liaison.

Oregon labor law conference Friday, Jan. 27, in Portland

Mark your calendars for Friday, Jan. 27, date of the 16th annual Oregon Labor Law Conference.

The conference is for business managers, business agents and union officers. The goal is to provide information that will help them do their jobs better and to help avoid legal liability.

The focus this year is on the basic mechanics of running a union. There will be classes on arbitration, collective bargaining, the National Labor Relations Board, the Oregon Employment Relations Board; classes on how to conduct union elections and required recordkeeping; a class on the world after Wisconsin; and classes on workers’

compensation and Social Security.

The conference is sponsored by IBEW Local 48, Oregon AFL-CIO, Northwest Oregon Labor Council, the Labor Education and Research Center of the University of Oregon, the Oregon and Columbia Pacific building and construction trades councils, and the Center for Worker Rights.

For registration information, go to www.laborlawconference.com or contact Norman Malbin by email at Norman@IBEW48.com, or call 503 889-3669; or Kristi Straight by email at Kristi@IBEW48.com, or call 503-889-3660.

Avakian to speak at LERA breakfast

Oregon Labor Commissioner Brad Avakian will be the featured speaker at a Jan. 17 breakfast program sponsored by the Oregon Labor Employment Relations Association (LERA). Avakian will give an update on activities at the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industry, including changes in laws and decisions and regulations that may impact work sites in 2012 and beyond.

The breakfast begins at 7:30 a.m. at

the Clackamas Community College, 29353 Town Center Loop East in Wilsonville. The cost for LERA members is \$25, or \$35 for non-members.

To register in advance, e-mail oregonlera@gmail.com, or contact Anna Roberts at Annar@seiu49.org.

LERA is an organization that brings labor, management, neutrals and academics together to improve labor-management relations.



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Fundraiser for OSPIRG fires two workers who helped form a union

Employees at Fund for the Public Interest's Portland call center voted in October to unionize with CWA

A non-profit fundraiser for OSPIRG and its spinoff group Environment Oregon has fired two workers who helped lead a campaign to unionize. On Oct. 12, workers at the Portland call center run by the Fund for the Public Interest voted 19-to-5 to join Communications Workers of America (CWA) Local 7901. In December, the Fund terminated Kris Humbird and Mike Schultz — two of the three workers who were elected to the union's contract bargaining team.

Fund for the Public Interest is a national non-profit organization that is linked to the state public interest advocacy groups known as PIRGs. The Fund runs PIRG canvass operations in multiple states, and telephone outreach call centers in Boston, Sacramento and Portland.

The Fund may have a history of union-busting. According to one press account, after Fund workers in Los Angeles voted in 2005 to unionize, management fired union supporters, refused to negotiate, and put a freeze on new hiring in the high-turnover workplace. Eleven months after the union vote, the Fund closed the Los Angeles office altogether, and moved the operation to Sacramento.

Humbird, 33, says he learned of the Los Angeles case soon after he began working for the Fund six years ago, when a donor told him he would no longer give to CalPIRG because it was a union-buster.

Will the Fund similarly try to bust the union campaign at the Portland office? After the union vote, workers say, the Fund directed the Portland office to stop calling a donor list for U.S. PIRG. It transferred that list to the Sacramento call center, and gave the Portland call center less lucrative lists. For example, the Portland callers were made to ask for end-of-year donations from donors who'd given just months before, or were given donors to Environment Colorado who had moved out of Colorado. Soon after, three workers were placed on probation for failing to meet fundraising quotas, and a fourth worker, Schultz, was fired.

As for Humbird, officially he was fired for calling in sick too late. He says that was a pretext.

Local 7901 has filed three charges with the National Labor Relations Board alleging that the Fund broke federal labor law — for firing Humbird, changing the list, and refusing to provide information about the list after the union asked for it in bargaining.

It also appears the Fund may have

outsourced calling for Environment Oregon to Gordon and Schwenkmeyer Inc., a for-profit telemarketing firm based in El Segundo, California.

Job security was one of several motives workers had for unionizing, says Local 7901 President Madelyn Elder. Workers would like a fairer pay system, she says, including more control over the quotas they're judged by. Workers start at \$8.50 an hour and can rise to \$14.50. Every 80 hours, they're evaluated; if they meet targets, their hourly pay goes up 50 cents, but if they do poorly, the pay can drop much more than 50 cents. There are also bonuses that average \$40 every two weeks, depending on how much money they raise on the phone. But workers who don't meet the weekly quota are placed on "ultimatum," and if they miss the quota two weeks in a row, they're terminated — regardless of how long they've worked there. Workers interviewed by the Labor Press said they may work one or two four-hour shifts from 1 to 9 p.m., but are prevented from working full-time. They have no paid sick days or any other paid time off.

"There's a long history in the Fund of treating workers as if they're disposable," said Schultz, also 33, who was fired for missing quota.

Schultz said he worked as a canvasser for the Fund from 2001-2005, and had been in the call center six months when he was fired for missing quotas on the new list two weeks in a row. Workers have no say in choosing or preparing the call lists or setting the quotas.

"I feel like I was fired because I was one of the most vocal pro-union people in the office," Schultz told the Labor Press.

The workers have set up a support page on Facebook: Portland T.O.P. Unite. They also wrote a letter to the heads of OSPIRG and Environment Oregon, asking them to intervene. Humbird said their replies were nearly identical: The groups said they only contract with the Fund, and that they believe the Fund is negotiating in good faith.

Workers also wear red CWA T-shirts on Wednesdays, and have borrowed tactics from Occupy Wall Street: Before a shift begins, a worker will yell, "mic check!" and co-workers will

respond, setting up a group amplification system to voice complaints about the list and fired co-workers.

On Dec. 15, workers and supporters staged a picket — and caroling — outside the Fund office, 1536 SE 11th Ave.

Oregon AFL-CIO President Tom Chamberlain met with OSPIRG executive director David Rosenfeld to convey labor's concerns.

"I told him workers should be treated fairly, and to me this didn't pass the sniff test," Chamberlain said.

The state labor federation has at times worked closely with OSPIRG in the Oregon Legislature.

"We're going to support our affiliate CWA and the workers at that call center, whatever it takes," Chamberlain told the Labor Press. "The rights of those workers outweigh any relationship we may have with OSPIRG."

Rosenfeld did not return a call from the Labor Press.

The union bargaining team has met with management just once to bargain a contract — for four hours in November — with the Fund's National Telephone Outreach Project Director Pat Wood. Another bargaining session is scheduled for Jan. 10-11.



'Spirit of Giving' for our furry friends

TANGENT, Ore. — IBEW Local 280 raised over \$1,000 this year for its "Spirit of Giving Sheltered Animal Drive." The money was used to purchase "Kong" dog toys, rawhide bones, blankets, food, detergent, bleach, and grooming supplies for dogs and cats at the Linn County and Lane County animal shelters. Additionally, the local's Executive Board granted both shelters \$750 each for veterinary expenses. Money was raised through membership donations and from the local's public service fund. Money for that fund comes from a cents-per-hour checkoff negotiated in the union's collective bargaining agreement with contractors.

"We are very happy to say that every dog in both shelters received a dog toy and rawhide bone for Christmas, and every cat received a toy, too," said Local 280 receptionist Sherri Wallman, who coordinates the fundraiser.

"Many people forget about the homeless, neglected and abused animals this time of year," Wallman said. "Most people are aware of, and donate to, the Humane Society, but they forget about the county shelters. Unfortunately, they look at these shelters as the 'Dog Pound,' which is the farthest thing from the truth."

Wallman said the two animal shelters she selected work hard to find homes for lost, abused, and neglected animals. Last year the shelters found homes for 91 percent of the 2,894 dogs and cats they took in.

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...YEAR IN REVIEW: Top labor stories of 2011

(From Page 1)

business-as-usual.

In Portland, while the occupation of two downtown squares drew carping about mess and for attracting the homeless, union support for the camp and ideas it represented never publicly wavered. The downtown camp was evicted

by police Nov. 13 after 37 days of occupation, but the idea of occupation moved on to banks, a bridge, and ports. An Occupy revival seems likely in 2012.

In Wisconsin, protest energy succeeded in recalling two of six targeted Republican state senators who voted for

the anti-union bill, which took effect anyway. But voters in Ohio struck down — by better than a three-to-two margin — that state's version of a law stripping public employee bargaining rights.

For the trade union movement, there were other developments of national note in 2011.

• In April, a group of 43,000 **transportation security officers** at 450 airports voted to unionize, and in June selected American Federation of Government Employees over an independent union.

• Also in April, National Labor Relations Board dared to enforce federal la-

bor law in a case involving **Boeing**, and all hell broke loose in Congress among Republicans. Evidence from top Boeing leaders was that the company had located its 787 Dreamliner final assembly in South Carolina expressly because union members had struck at its other locations; that's against the law, and the NLRB brought Boeing before a federal judge. House Republicans called for repeal of the law and tried to subpoena the agency's legal strategies. But in December, Boeing and the Machinists union buried the hatchet with a four-year contract extension that includes a pledge to locate some future assembly work at existing union facilities.

• In August, 45,000 workers at **Verizon's** East Coast land line operations went on strike for two weeks, returning to work when Verizon pledged to resume bargaining with Communications Workers of America. Five months later, the workers are still without a union contract.

In the Portland area, the economy wasn't bleak for all workers: Many building trades union members got back to work in 2011 — building a \$4 billion chip plant for **Intel**, a \$344 million hospital for **Kaiser Permanente**, and performing a \$144 million renovation of the **Edith Green Wendell Wyatt Federal Building**. In October, **Daimler Trucks North America** began adding several hundred workers at its Portland truck plant.

Other local stories of note:

• Starting in January, members of Amalgamated Transit Union Local 757 began picketing outside all meetings of **TriMet's** board of directors after the transit agency halted cost-of-living wage increases and started taking money out of workers' paychecks to cover a portion of their health insurance costs. The union contract expired Nov. 30, 2009, and the sides were awaiting an arbitrator's ruling on several unfair labor practice complaints when TriMet unilaterally implemented the changes. The sides are still waiting for the state arbitrator's decision.

• A fired pro-union teacher at private **Portland French School** won reinstatement in a case with the National Labor Relations Board, only to see all 40 employees lose their jobs when the partially unionized school shut down in May. The non-profit school had a history of bad financial practices, but may have been pushed over the edge by the \$170,000 in legal bills to oppose a campaign to join American Federation of Teachers.

• It was a bad year for long-time union foe **Bill Sizemore**. In March, a judge tossed out his lawsuit against several unions and union-supported groups for calling him a racketeer. "The court finds that it could be reasonably inferred that Bill Sizemore was a 'convicted racketeer,' the judge wrote in his decision. Then in August, Sizemore spent 18 days in jail for not filing tax returns — presumably to shield income from

(Turn to Page 10)

What You See When You Look for the Label

In the 1970s, union families found themselves humming that familiar tune made popular by a chorus of women from the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) straight out of New York garment shops. The lyrics were simple and catchy:

"Look for the union label // When you are buying a coat, dress or blouse. // Remember somewhere our union's sewing // our wages going to feed the kids and run the house, // We work hard but who's complaining. // Thanks to the I.L.G. we're paying our way. // So, always look for the union label, // it says we're able to make it in the U.S.A." (www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q07VUKIDIQw)

The song was one of those that got in your head and never left, even though the ad was aired a mere 60 times over seven years. The ILG paid about \$8 million for the entire campaign and awakened label curiosity among millions of shoppers—spurring them to seek out labels beyond garments and to look on tools, hardware, autos, appliances and foodstuffs as well.

Today, shoppers who look at labels in the U.S. marketplace are more often disappointed than rewarded. The only thing more rare than a made-in-the-USA label in 2011 is the union label, which has practically disappeared save for printed materials or some varieties of Miller Beer.

U.S. Law is Clear

When it comes to labeling products, U.S. law is pretty clear. First of all, the U.S. Customs Service requires that every product imported into the United States, with a few minor exceptions, must be labeled with its country of origin—where it was made.

Imported food is also regulated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture under a 2004 law that requires food products to be labeled as to their source country. The 2004 Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) Act has come under fire from several foreign countries, most notably Mexico and Canada, with claims that the requirement is a "barrier to trade" under NAFTA. That matter is still being hashed out.

Finally, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) enforces country of origin labeling requirements for textiles and furs. The FTC also gets involved in enforcement if manu-

facturers make false or misleading claims about the source of a product.

Manufacturers know that deep down many Americans would buy union and that the majority would prefer U.S. made goods if only they could find them. Some producers will even go so far as to cheat and they run the risk of paying significant fines, but only if they get caught and the FTC doesn't have a label police force. The FTC generally relies on reports by consumers or competitors who blow the whistle on scofflaws.

More aggressive label enforcement falls to the U.S. Customs Service, a branch of the Treasury Department. Customs' involvement is triggered most frequently if an importer tries to distribute products for sale in the U.S. without the country of origin clearly labeled so that the final consumer can see it. If an importer gets caught attempting to distribute products without the country of origin plainly shown on the product, that importer can be required to either: recall and correctly label the product, return the entire shipment to its source, or surrender the shipment to Customs to be destroyed.

Keeping Merchants Honest

The FTC's primary role is to fight against deceptive business practices, not to police where products are made. For instance, claiming a product is made in America when it is not is a deceptive business practice that the FTC would be responsible for punishing. Likewise, it's punishable for a carmaker to make false claims about higher fuel efficiency, or to assert phony claims about the energy usage of an appliance.

The FTC—the agency charged with trying to keep merchants honest about product claims—requires that a label that says: "Made in America," or some variation, then "all or virtually all" of the product must be from the U.S. and assembled in the U.S. The FTC adopted that rule over 60 years ago and affirmed it most recently in 1997.

A "Made-in-the-USA" statement on a label would be an example of what the FTC calls an "unqualified" claim of U.S. manufacture.

On the other hand, a label might say "assembled in the U.S." from components made elsewhere. Such a claim would fall

Let the Buyer Beware: It's Up to You to Demand Truth in Labeling

A local union president recently wrote to the Union Label Department complaining that an order of imprinted shirts the union had purchased was delivered with no labels inside at all. The union had stipulated that the shirts be made in the USA. When he questioned the vendor the local president was told that the labels had been removed because the information on it would have enabled the purchaser to go around the vendor and make future orders directly.

Foul!

The Department found that the shirts, marketed by Alpha Marketing and sold under the brand name, Harriton, do not claim to be made in the USA. The embroidery company had to know that fact.

Suggestion: If you set out to get apparel with your union logo attached, deal with a firm that will certify the source of the product and deliver the product with the manufacturer's label attached.

under the FTC's description of a "qualified claim." A qualified claim might also include the percentage of domestic components and a listing of the countries of origin for those components that are not from the U.S. As long as such claims are true they are within the law.

Finally, the FTC says, whether a claim of U.S. origin is implied or asserted, it has to be true. The important point is that businesses are not allowed to lie to consumers about where a product is made or how it performs, but it's mostly up to consumers or competitors to file complaints about such deceptive practices because the government just doesn't have the resources to keep cops in the marketplace. ■

...YEAR IN REVIEW

(From Page 9)

garnishment in the multi-million damage award he owes to two unions for the pattern of ballot measure campaign fraud and forgery that led to that 2002 civil conviction on racketeering.

• Allegations of personal misconduct dogged Oregon 1st District Congressman **David Wu** in the first half of 2011, leading eventually to his resignation in August. In the special election Democratic primary to replace him, **Suzanne Bonamici** outpolled Oregon Labor Commissioner **Brad Avakian** and State Representative **Brad Witt**, a former secretary-treasurer of the Oregon AFL-CIO and current union rep for United Food and Commercial Workers Local 555. Bonamici will face Republican Rob Cornilles in a Jan. 31, 2012, special election.

• International Longshore and Warehouse Union, shut out of operating EGT's new \$200 million grain terminal in Longview, Washington, joined a federal lawsuit by the Port of Longview, and ramped up protests beginning with a 1,200-strong rally in June. In July, workers entered the terminal and dumped grain into the yard. Then EGT took ILWU by surprise, signing a five-year deal for members of Operating Engineers Local 701 to operate the shipping terminal as employees of contractor General Construction Co. ILWU protests continued, however, with several episodes of mass civil disobedience on railroad tracks, halting grain shipments for a time. The legal cases and pressure campaign continue in 2012.



Newly unionized workers at Dosh Salon rally for a first contract. The unit voted to join CWA in March. The company is putting up an expensive fight and workers still don't have a collective bargaining agreement.

In Oregon, several large employers went union in 2011:

• On Jan. 5 Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 49 won an election, by four votes, to represent 600 support staff at Central Oregon's largest hospital, **St. Charles Medical Center** in Bend. It was Oregon's biggest private sector union win in recent history.

• A group of 155 workers at **Dosha Salon and Spa** voted in March to join Communications Workers of America Local 7901. But owner Ray Motameni hired former Oregon Republican Party chair Bob Tiernan and an associate to represent him in negotiations, and it's not clear that workers are any closer to a first contract at the end of the year than

they were when they started bargaining.

• In June, a unit of 7,751 state-paid personal service providers voted to join SEIU Local 503, making it Oregon's largest union.

• A group of 160 workers at **Planned Parenthood** of the Columbia-Willamette voted in August to join SEIU Local 49.

On the other hand, union-busting also went on all year long at employers all over, with union supporters fired at **Rogue Ales**, **Dosha Salon Spa**, **MetroWest Ambulance**, **Grange Cooperative**, **Georgia-Pacific**, and numerous other employers. A local Starbucks barista, fired after wearing union pins, got a \$10,000-plus settlement.

In the second half of the year, U.S. Postal Service unions campaigned hard to oppose service cuts and post office closures, with rallies, and appeals for support from local and federal elected officials. USPS is proposing a major set of closures to cope with declining revenues and unusual retiree benefit prefunding requirements imposed by Congress.

In November, Washingtonians voted to privatize liquor sales, in a ballot measure bought and paid for by Costco. After the vote, Costco declared that the 1,000 soon-to-be-laid-off union members working at state liquor stores could apply for jobs at its big box warehouse stores. Two unions that represent liquor store employees — UFCW and the Teamsters — have filed a lawsuit to invalidate the election, claiming the measure was unconstitutional because it violated the state's "single subject" rule.

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Medicare proposal: Tried-and-failed 'zombie'

(AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka has issued the following statement regarding U.S. Rep. Paul Ryan's and U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden's plan under which Medicare would subsidize premiums charged by private insurers.)

The Ryan-Wyden proposal cripples Medicare in order to give the Republican Party a political boost and to earn Sen. Wyden praise from powerful people who care more about the appearance of bipartisanship and insurance industry profits than the health of America's seniors.

The basic idea is to have private for-profit insurance companies compete

with traditional Medicare. But we already know this does not work since Medicare is more cost-effective than private plans and for-profit insurance companies "compete" by cherry-picking healthier patients and making it harder for their sicker patients to get the care they need.

This zombie idea has already been tried and has already failed. We tried it before with Medicare Advantage, which failed to reduce costs or deliver quality care. Medicare Advantage's costs were 13 percent higher than traditional Medicare.

Rep. Ryan spent 2011 on the defensive, defending his politically deadly

proposal to replace traditional Medicare with vouchers for private insurance. The Congressional Budget Office already found that plan would increase overall health care costs by \$34 trillion over 75 years and increase out-of-pocket costs by \$6,000 per senior per year.

Ryan-Wyden is not about cost containment, and even its authors admit that vouchers would not be more cost-effective than traditional Medicare. So as a fallback they propose a budget cap, but they neglect to provide the necessary details about how their fail-safe mechanism would work or who would pay the price for failure.

The Ryan-Wyden plan betrays a fundamental misdiagnosis of the problem of health care cost growth. We agree that if America fails to bring health care cost growth under control, health care costs will eventually bankrupt families, private businesses, state governments, and the federal government.

But Medicare, which is more cost-effective than private insurance, is not the problem, it is the solution to runaway health care costs. It is the height of irony that the Ryan-Wyden plan destabilizes the most effective tool we have to control health care cost growth, which is Medicare. Under Ryan-Wyden, private for-profit insurance

OPEN FORUM

companies will cherry pick the healthiest seniors and stick Medicare with sicker and more costly seniors, driving up costs for Medicare, fragmenting and destabilizing the Medicare risk pool, and leaving traditional Medicare to wither on the vine.

In the end, the answer to the problem of health care cost growth is for more people to use Medicare, not fewer. The Ryan-Wyden zombie proposal takes us in exactly the wrong direction.

Unions step up big time to help those less fortunate

To The Editor:

In recent years, United Ways throughout Oregon and Southwest Washington have used the slogan "Live United" to encourage individuals and organizations to invest in their communities, reach out to people in need, and volunteer time and energy for the greater good. It's a tall order when workers have been, and continue to be, crushed by unemployment — up to 40 percent in some local trades — as we enter yet another year of slim prospects for jobs at a family living wage with benefits.

Knowing that the 2011 winter holidays would be challenging, Labor's

Community Service Agency braced, setting aside extra funds in advance for its November-December programs. When the tidal wave of referrals for help with Thanksgiving meals came in, it tripled the number of families receiving assistance and washed out the budget. Certainly the need in December would be equal or even greater with the need for more funds, toys, and volunteers. How would we meet it?

The call went out to the labor community, through the Northwest Oregon and Southwest Washington central labor councils; the Northwest Labor Press, union local grapevines, and word-of-mouth.

Labor's immediate and generous response was a tidal wave all its own. The results were incredible: Over \$10,000 in contributions to provide holiday dinners for 250 families — more than 1,000 lives enriched by labor's actions with the holiday dinner program alone.

Some 1,200 toys and resources to put on the biggest and best toy party yet, with lunch, goodies, pictures with Santa, and toys galore. Hundreds of volunteers from labor unions across the board with the common goal of making the holidays brighter for unemployed families.

Our labor community makes a compelling statement about living united. It

is what we do, how we respond and operate, every day. I am proud to stand beside you, to work with and for you, and to share your Live United spirit with community members in need.

On behalf of everyone served in 2011, and the brothers and sisters Labor's Community Service Agency will continue to serve, thank you. It is an honor to have labor's trust, support, and partnership, and I look forward to what we will accomplish together in 2012.

In thanks and solidarity.

Vickie Burns
Executive Director
LCSA-Portland

Thought for the New Year

Ten thousand times has the labor movement stumbled and fallen and bruised itself, and risen again;

been seized by the throat and choked and clubbed into insensibility;

enjoined by courts, assaulted by thugs, charged by the militia, shot down by regulars;

traded by the press, frowned upon by public opinion, deceived by politicians, threatened by priests;

repudiated by renegades, preyed upon by grafters, infested by spies, deserted by cowards, betrayed by traitors, bled by leeches, and sold out by leaders;

but notwithstanding all this, and all these, it is today the most vital and potential power this planet has ever known;

and its historic mission of emancipating the workers of the world from the thralldom of the ages is as certain of ultimate realization as is the setting of the sun.

(Editor's Note: This is an excerpt from "An Ideal Labor Press," written in May 1904 by Eugene V. Debs. It was submitted by Ed Barnes, a retired business manager of IBEW Local 48 and member of the Oregon Labor Press Publishing Association board of directors.)

PITY THE 1 PERCENT! Billionaires bemoan criticism by 'imbeciles'

By ADELE STAN

It's tough these days being a member of the top 1 percent, what with all the complaints about the widening income gap and tax breaks for billionaires, not to mention the demands of the 99 percent for a little accountability.

"It feels lonely..." said John A. Allison IV, former CEO of BB&T, one of the nation's top 10 banks, to Bloomberg News.

Or, as billionaire Tom Golisano, founder of Paychex Inc., so delicately put it, according to Bloomberg: "If I hear a politician use the term 'paying your fair share' one more time, I'm going to vomit." Golisano, who turned 70 last month, celebrated the birthday with girlfriend Monica Seles, the former tennis star who won nine Grand Slam singles titles.

Even Jamie Dimond, the J.P. Morgan Chase CEO who took home a cool \$23 million last year, and John Paulson, the billionaire hedge fund manager, have publicly bemoaned their targeting by Occupy Wall Street and other detractors.

So what's a lonely, nauseous billionaire to do? Organize!

Enter the so-called Job Creators Alliance (JCA), a sort of one-stop mes-

saging operation, complete with a speakers bureau and media booking operation for those underappreciated fat cats. The group's 17 featured business leaders say they aim to "shape the national agenda," according to the JCA website.

Among the alliance's founding members is Bernie Marcus, co-founder of Home Depot, who still seems to need a little work on his messaging. Asked by Bloomberg reporter Max Abelson whether he was concerned about becoming the target of protesters, Marcus replied: "Who gives a crap about some imbecile? Are you kidding me?"

One of the burning issues on that agenda is the 1 percent's disdain for a section of the Dodd-Frank bill that requires publicly-traded corporations to disclose the ratio between their CEO's compensation and the median pay package given employees. BB&T's Allison, who still sits on the bank's board and is one of the 17 JCA-appointed "spokes-billionaires" for the 1 percent, complained to Bloomberg that the rule was "an attack on the very productive."

This definition of productivity must include small business foreclosures and employee layoffs. BB&T, which took

\$3.1 billion in bailout funds (since repaid), announced late in December that it was eliminating an unspecified number of positions, lending an Orwellian bent to his role in the purported Job Creators Alliance.

Excessive CEO pay is now seen as one of the key drivers of the housing bubble that led to the crashing of the economy in 2008. AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka noted at a conference on the topic last month that the average CEO of the top 500 corporations listed by Standard & Poor's now collects 343 times the amount in compensation as the median paycheck received by his or her workers.

A scroll through the JCA website found several links to the billionaires Charles and David Koch, the anti-labor siblings who run Koch Industries, the second-largest privately held company in the United States. Bernie Marcus' business partner, Ken Langone, attended at least two of the brothers' secret retreats for wealthy political donors, according to reporting by ThinkProgress. Art Pope, one of the JCA 17, is vice chair of the Americans For Prosperity Foundation, which is chaired by David Koch. Pope also sits on the board of Americans For Pros-

perity, the foundation's sibling organization.

Two JCA staff have Koch connections, as well. JCA President Jeanette Goodman and message team member Lee Habeeb previously worked for the National Center for Policy Analysis, a right-wing, climate-change-denying think tank funded by the Kochs.

(Editor's Note: Adele Stand writes for the AFL-CIONow news blog.)

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Busted!

A sampler of recent charges of employer labor law violations at the local office of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB).

Vancouver Hilton to be converted to office space

If workers vote to boycott the **Hilton Vancouver and Convention Center**, it will go bankrupt, shut down, lose the Hilton flag, and be converted to an office building. That's a remarkable claim considering that the facility is publicly owned. But that's what workers — members of **UNITE HERE Local 9** — were told by management in the days leading up to a boycott vote, according to charges the union filed Dec. 2. Local 9 accuses Hilton management of interfering with its internal process — a vote on whether to boycott the hotel, nearly six months after the union contract expired. Managers threatened unspecified reprisals, scheduled employees to work during the boycott vote, escorted them to the vote and remained there while they voted, and even gave workers donuts for voting "no." The boycott proposal, recommended by union leaders, lost 57-49. Since then, one outspoken union activist at the hotel, telephone operator Lucas Fielder, was fired Dec. 21, a day after he spoke out at a protest vigil.

Crackdown at St. Charles

St. Charles Medical Center in Bend sounds like a dictatorship in a case filed last month by **Service Employees International Union Local 49**. Workers at St. Charles — Central Oregon's largest hospital — voted in January 2011 to join Local 49. Since then, management has tried to impose new rules without the consent of the workers or their union, including no-solicitation rules, no-talk rules, no-access rules, and rules against the wearing or distribution of union insignia. Union activists have resisted, says spokesperson Felisa Hagins, but have also been targeted for warnings of potential discipline for carrying out union activities. Management has also interfered with workers' right to have a union rep present at disciplinary meetings. And employees attending union activities have been surveilled by management. Hagins says workers are uncowed, however. In November, they voted down a contract offer from management that the union was not endorsing. Bargaining continues, with dates set for late January.

Union? What union?

At **Tidewater Barge Lines** in Vancouver, workers are represented by the **Inland Boatmen's Union**, a division of **International Longshore and Warehouse Union**. But of late, the employer has been acting as if the union is out to sea, according to charges filed Dec. 19. Tidewater has been bargaining directly with workers about disciplinary matters, working out "return to work" agreements with disciplined workers, and without notifying the union. In September, a worker was fired for allegedly failing to comply with such an agreement. That's out of line, says IBU in the charge.

New NLRB union election rule to take effect April 30

WASHINGTON, D.C. — A new rule on the way union elections are conducted will take effect April 30, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) announced late last month. The rule will help alleviate the delays, inefficiencies, abuse of process, and unnecessary litigation which plague the current system for workers who want to vote on whether to have a union.

AFL-CIO President Richard

Trumka says it's "good news" that the NLRB "has taken this modest but important step to help ensure that workers who want to vote to form a union at their workplace get a fair opportunity to do so."

The new rule, says NLRB Chairman Mark Pearce, gives workers who have petitioned for an election the "right to vote in a timely manner and without the impediment of needless litigation."

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