



Hiroshi Nakamura Emerald

State Rep. Kitty Piercy, D-Eugene, urges protesters and calls for preservation of employees' right to join a union. She was one of the speakers at Monday night's rally.

Register-Guard staff rallies to protest lack of contract

■ After more than a year with no contract, employees have grown weary of negotiations

By Josh Ryneal
Oregon Daily Emerald

Appearing at a rally Monday for The Register-Guard's employee union, Secretary of State Bill Bradbury and other state and county officials expressed strong support for its efforts to obtain a new contract.

Bradbury; state Rep. Kitty Piercy, D-Eugene; Lane County Commissioner Peter Sorenson; and state Sen. Tony Corcoran, D-Cottage Grove, all criticized the paper's management for not responding quickly enough to employee demands.

Contract negotiations between the Eugene Newspaper Guild and The Register-Guard management have lasted 18 months, and Guild members believe the management's hiring of L. Michael Zinser, a Nashville attorney with reputation among labor organizers as a "union-buster," has created an atmosphere that allows for no room for compromise.

Bradbury opened his remarks by leading the crowd assembled in front of the paper's offices in a

chant of "we support the Guild" and then proceeded to denounce the paper's management as "not a good member of the community."

Bradbury said "we are no longer seeing the direct negotiations that you need to get this dispute resolved."

Management "needs to walk their talk," and Zinser needs to walk his talk," Bradbury said as the audience cheered loudly.

He then called on the paper's management to support "everyone's right to organize the workplace."

Piercy said "this has been going on for way too long" and called for a guarantee from management to preserve employees' right to join unions.

"Workers support families and kids, and I don't like to see management not consider the income that supports these families," Sorenson said.

He said that the employees would have the support of local government in their fight for a new and better contract.

The paper's management was unavailable for comment.

Suzi Prozanski, Register-Guard copy editor and president of the Guild, said that the rally's date was set to coincide with the expiration of their contract one year ago.

"All we want a fair contract," Prozanski said, "but only one or two paragraphs out of a 110-page proposal have been settled in a year and a half."

Prozanski said that the management negotiation team, led by Zinser, has attempted to modify the employees' contract to give more control to the paper's management and eliminate the Guild's ability to bargain.

"They tried to put in three pages of management language that would tear down everything the Guild stands for," she said.

Lance Robertson, Register-Guard reporter and lead negotiator for the Guild, said that it is in Zinser's best interest for negotiations to drag on.

"We haven't even gotten to the issue of wages yet," he said.

Robertson also said that the management's proposal contains "an enormous amount of anti-worker language," and would attempt to replace full-time employees with part-time ones whenever possible. The proposal would also pay part-time employees a lesser wage than that paid to full-time employees.

This proposal "would allow them to replace anyone, anywhere at the paper, at any time," he said.

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