

Let me say this about that

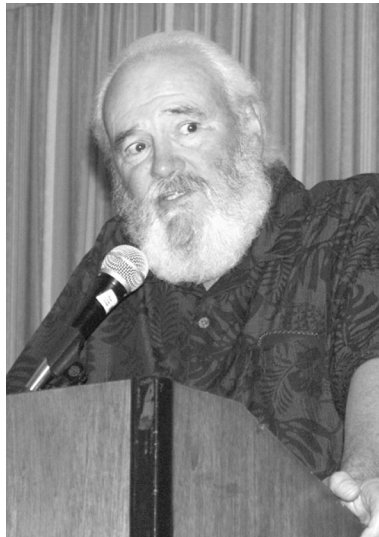
—By Gene Klare



Fame for Billy Mitchell

BILLY MITCHELL, a retired officer of Portland-based Iron Workers Local 29, takes center stage in this first issue of 2007 of the Northwest Labor Press as the newest honoree in the Labor Hall of Fame, which is sponsored by the Northwest Oregon Labor Retirees Council.

The Retirees Council is affiliated with the NW Oregon Labor Council, AFL-CIO, and meets monthly in the NOLC boardroom at 1125 SE Madison St., Portland.



BILLY MITCHELL

MITCHELL, 70, retired in 1993 from the presidency of Local 29; he also was the assistant to the union's business manager, Tom Worley. Earlier in his career, Mitchell had been the business manager.

Billy T. Mitchell was born on June 10, 1936 at the family home in McLennan County, Texas, near the town of Lorena, which is south of Waco. He graduated from high school at nearby Gatesville, and later served in the U.S. Navy. He was an engineman on the USS St. Paul, a cruiser which operated in the Pacific Ocean's Far East region, docking in Japan and Taiwan. The first time he saw the Pacific Northwest was when his ship was drydocked at Bremerton, Washington, for repairs at the U.S. Naval Shipyard there.

AFTER HIS NAVY SERVICE, Mitchell returned to Texas, working

construction in Dallas and Houston. In Houston, he worked on permit from the Iron Workers local union there. The contractor he worked for in Houston obtained a major project in Kalispell, Montana, where Mitchell became a member of the Iron Workers Union in 1964. From there he moved to Portland in 1966 and transferred his membership into Local 29. At that time Local 29 was still in the old Labor Temple, diagonally across the street from City Hall, and John O'Halloran was the business manager. (Local 29 and other tenants of the Labor Temple, including the Labor Press, moved into the new Labor Center at SW First and Arthur in mid-June of 1966.)

Mitchell told the Labor Press that he "worked all over the country" as a member of Local 29. Later, working in Portland, he became active in the union and was elected sergeant-at-arms, and next was elected as an Executive Board member and a delegate to the Pacific Northwest Iron Workers District Council. He was tapped by Local 29 Business Manager LeRoy Worley to be his assistant in 1978. When Worley was appointed a general organizer by the Iron Workers International in 1981, Mitchell succeeded him as business manager. (LeRoy Worley advanced in the International to a vice president and later was the union's general secretary in Washington, D.C. When he retired, he returned to the Pacific Northwest. LeRoy and Tom are brothers.)

MITCHELL REPRESENTED Local 29 as a delegate to various labor organizations including the Columbia-Pacific and Oregon State Building and Construction Trades Councils, the Oregon AFL-CIO and, of course, conventions of the International Association of Bridge, Structural and Ornamental Iron Workers. He served as a trustee of health & welfare and pension trust funds covering Local 29's members.

JOBS IN OREGON were scarce in the Reagan Recession after Republican Ronald Reagan, elected in 1980, had been in office a couple of years. Mitchell and Tom Worley decided to work together on projects in California. They re-

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...Labor's 2007 legislative agenda

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managers bring in a speaker to talk about the perils of unionism, and require employees to attend. Oregon unions will be backing a local version of a bill that passed last year in New Jersey which prohibits employers from requiring attendance at any meeting to communicate an opinion about religious or political matters.

• **Ban the use of public funds to fight unionization.** Any employer that gets grants, contracts or subsidies from the state government would be prohibited from spending money to oppose union campaigns among its employees.

• **Extend union rights to farmworkers.** Farmworker advocates want Oregon to adopt a variant of a California law that gives farmworkers a process for unionizing. It includes union recognition on the basis of "card check," and binding arbitration to settle a first labor agreement.

• **Get full collective bargaining rights for state-subsidized child care providers.** The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees and the Service Employees International Union will try to expand

the collective bargaining rights of a group of child care providers they represent under a pair of governor's executive orders. Right now the orders direct only that the state agency overseeing the low-income child care subsidy "meet and confer" with the unions as representatives of the providers, and honor the terms of informal agreements they reach.

PROMOTING JOB GROWTH OF DECENT PAYING JOBS

• **Invest in infrastructure.** Building trades unions will back Governor Kulongoski's proposals for new rounds of public investment, which will provide employment to thousands of construction workers. The proposals include up to \$600 million in bonds to finance repair and upgrade of college buildings; lottery-backed bonds to build a new light-rail line connecting Portland and Milwaukie; and \$100 million to upgrade port facilities, railroads, airports and transit systems. Unions will also support a plan backed by business interests to raise fuel tax and vehicle registration fees to deal with highway maintenance and congestion problems.

• **Stimulate growth in the alterna-**

tive energy industry. The Oregon AFL-CIO has been working with environmental groups in the Fair and Clean Energy Coalition, and contributed ideas to a governor's task force on the subject. Unions will be backing the governor's proposals, which include requiring utilities to generate 25 percent of their electricity from renewable resources by 2025; increasing the ethanol content of gasoline and the availability of biodiesel; raising the tax credit for investment in alternative energy projects; and developing the nation's first commercial-scale wave energy park. Unions will want to add one thing to the governor's package that's not in there now — some assurance that the jobs created will be family wage jobs and will be in Oregon.

• **Assure that mixed public-private construction projects pay the prevailing wage.** Building trades unions expect to go to Salem hand-in-hand with their longtime adversary, the Portland Development Commission (PDC), to pass a compromise law resolving a long-contested issue — whether projects that mix public and private money must pay state-mandated "prevailing wages" to construction workers. Both parties have agreed to back a bill that says any project with more than \$1 million of taxpayer money would have to pay prevailing wage, regardless of how much private money went into project.

GIVING GOVERNMENT THE RESOURCES TO GET THE JOB DONE

Right-wing Republicans want the poor, sick and elderly to turn to the private sector, not government, for aid, and they don't like government regulatory restraints on corporations. So they've worked over the years to deprive state and local governments of resources. Now, a return to Democratic control is raising hopes of "tax fairness" and greater stability of funding for schools, law enforcement and other priorities. Here are some ideas the governor is proposing, with union

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