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'Firefighter Day' at MDA summer camp

July 11 was "Firefighter Day" at the Muscular Dystrophy Association summer camp in Welches. More than 100 union firefighters from throughout Oregon showed off their rigs, enjoyed a barbecue lunch hosted by Portland Fire Fighters Local 43, and participated in games, such as "water ball" (above), that pits firefighters against camp counselors and involves fire hoses. (For more photos and the story, turn to Page 7.)

Trade deals torpedoed in Democratic House

In a major victory for labor, fast-track expires without reauthorization

By DON McINTOSH
Associate Editor

It was the first victory in 10 years for foes of NAFTA-style trade agreements: House Democratic leaders announced June 29 they will not reauthorize "fast track." Nor will they ratify the trade deals President Bush negotiated with Colombia or South Korea. And in two other trade agreements, with Peru and Panama, the president gave unions what they've been asking for — workers' rights will have the same standing as investors' rights.

While Congress let fast-track treaty negotiating authority expire once before, no modern trade treaty negotiated by a U.S. president has ever failed to pass Congress until now.

The turnaround comes amid widespread conviction among voters that American trade policy is killing American jobs. The United States hasn't had a trade surplus since 1975. The U.S. trade deficit, which rose tenfold

in the Clinton years, doubled again since Bush took office, setting a new record every year since 2001. Last year it reached \$836 billion, equal to 6.3 percent of the U.S. economy.

Clearly, something about U.S. trade policy is enabling these trade imbalances. For a long time, U.S. unions have argued that NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement)-style trade deals are part of the cause. And all but one of the treaties — which the United States now has with 15 countries — were negotiated under fast track.

The U.S. Constitution gives Congress the power to regulate foreign commerce, but starting in 1974, Congress gave its power to the president by approving fast-track legislation. Under fast track, Congress agrees not to amend trade treaties and to vote them up or down soon after the president presents them. Presidents have argued it would be hard to bargain complicated trade deals if negotiating partners had to worry that Congress would later change the U.S. offer. But that's fine with the AFL-CIO, which

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Ending week-long strike

Machinists ratify three-year contract at Freightliner

Members of Machinists Lodge 1005 ended a week-long strike at Freightliner July 9 by ratifying a new three-year contract that includes successor and severance language should the company sell or close down. The vote to accept was 461-153.

Machinists walked off the job and set up picket lines at 12:01 a.m. July 3 after rejecting a proposal 331-224 that phased-out company-paid supplemental health insurance at age 65 for some workers, and added 10 hours a month of mandatory weekday overtime, if needed.

The rejected contract offer also included a wage increase of 9 percent (\$1.70 an hour) over three years, a pension hike of 60 cents an hour over three years, a \$1,000 ratification bonus, a reduction in co-payments for

health insurance premiums, and a "gainsharing" program in which employees could receive quarterly bonuses (ranging from \$100 to \$400) if they met quality and productivity benchmarks.

There was no job security or severance language in the first contract proposal.

Lodge 1005 represents 717 of the 1,000 unionized employees at the Swan Island manufacturing facility in North Portland. The other workers are represented by Teamsters Local 305, Service Employees Local 49 and Painters and Allied Trades Council 5. The unions bargain and vote as a coalition, but their contracts are separate for each craft.

Members of the three other unions approved their contracts on the first



From left to right, striking members of Machinists Local Lodge 1005 Quin Pond, Wayne Poe, Joe Repic and Carl Pollack picket Freightliner Corp. July 5 on Portland's Swan Island. The week-long strike was the first at Freightliner since June 1970. That strike lasted three months.

vote. All three unions honored the Machinists' picket line.

Three days into the strike, the union still hadn't heard from management, so late on the afternoon of July 6, Joe Kear, a business agent for Machinists District Lodge 24 and the chief negotiator, called the company. The sides met that evening and by midnight had hammered out what Freightliner described as its "last, best and final offer."

"We tried to work on the two major issues (that led to the strike), but made no progress," Kear told the NW Labor Press. "So we progressed to other issues."

Job security has been high on the list of concerns. Kear said the union has been trying for decades to get sev-

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