Third group of child care workers joins Laborers Local 320

WOODBURN — A third group of child care workers from the Oregon Child Development Coalition (OCDC) have voted to join Laborers Local 320.

Workers at the Marion County facility voted 68-9 on Dec. 3 for union representation.

"SI SE PUDO! (We did it!)," said Valentina Espinoza, a teacher who, along with Juan Pablo Contreras and Salvador Pantoja, helped lead the organizing campaign. "There's is a lot of work ahead (negotiations), but I know we will make it happen because we are united."

The new bargaining unit joins another 240 workers from two other OCDC districts. In October the union organized 70 workers at the Multnomah County unit in Gresham, and in July, 170 workers from Washington County's Cornelius and Forest Grove units signed up.

None of the elections have been close.

"All of the employees have the same issues. These are people who truly need the protection of a union," said Laborers organizer Ben Guzman. "Management has been taking care of themselves very well."

Statewide, OCDC employs about 1,100 workers at operations in 12 counties, servicing about 3,000 children and families.

The bargaining units consist of teachers, teacher assistants, cooks, bus drivers, custodians, and other workers.

Guzman is hopeful that the margins of victory and the increased market share will make securing a first contract a bit easier.

Only two rounds of bargaining have taken place in Washington County. Now, the union wants to combine the talks for all three units.

"Issues are the same at all the locations," Guzman said. "We hope OCDC will come forward and negotiate in good faith."

OCDC operates on a budget of almost $35 million a year. It gets funding from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Oregon Department of Education, Oregon Child Care Division, various school districts, and private donations.

Local 320 is headquartered in Portland. The union represents 1,250 workers in heavy and highway construction, at industrial plants, as well as in the public sector.

Employees from the Oregon Child Development Coalition in Marion County join Laborers Local 320 officials in Woodburn Dec. 3 to celebrate their union organizing victory. The vote was 68-9.

...Senate Republicans put skids on auto rescue deal

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Oregon Democrats Earl Blumenauer, David Wu, and Peter DeFazio. Republican Greg Walden voted against it. Democrat Darlene Hooley did not cast a vote.]

But the next day, a strange negotiation began, led by Republican Sen. Bob Corker of Tennessee. Corker called Gettelfinger and said that in return for Senate Republican support for the loans, the UAW would have to agree to further concessions. Despite reservations, Gettelfinger agreed to negotiate with Corker on modifications to the bill. Staff worked out a tentative deal, under which bondholders and the VEBA would have to accept company stock instead of cash for what they were owed. In addition, the restructuring plans approved by the auto czar next March would have to ensure that wages and benefits paid to active employees at domestic auto manufacturers be competitive with compensation paid by foreign transplants.

Gettelfinger said Corker admitted that the discussions over wages were largely about politics within the GOP caucus.

But Corker couldn't deliver the votes. The UAW got word that Senate Republican leaders wanted more: Union wages would have to immediately match those at foreign-owned companies.

"We were prepared to make further sacrifices," Gettelfinger said. "But we could not accept the effort by the Senate GOP caucus to single out workers and retirees for different treatment and to make them shoulder the entire burden of any restructuring."

No similar stipulations were demanded for management wages, dealer contracts, or supplier contracts.

In a press conference the day after the vote, Gettelfinger said he wondered whether the Corker talks were a set-up of some kind, and brandished what he said was a leaked memo from Senate Republican staffers explaining Senate GOP talking points about the bridge loan bill. "This is the Democrats' first opportunity to pay off labor after the election," the messaging memo advised recipients to tell the press, and "the precursor to card check and other items."

The memo continued: "Republicans should stand firm and take their first shot against organized labor instead of taking their first blow from it."

In effect, the majority of Senate Republicans were more interested in scapegoating organized labor than in preventing the collapse of the American auto industry.

The Senate vote, taken late Dec. 11, was 52-35. The bill's supporters in the Senate were not able to get 60 votes needed to close off debate and move the bill to a vote. [Washington Democrats Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell voted for cloture (and thus for the loan bill). Oregon Democrat Ron Wyden and Republican Gordon Smith did not vote.]

Ford isn't in imminent danger of collapse, but GM and Chrysler will have to hang on until the new Congress is sworn in in January. Until then, it will be up to the White House to use what discretion it has. As of press time, Treasury Secretary Hank Paulson was saying he would consider all options, including use of the Troubled Asset Relief Program, to assist the auto industry.

Oregon will lose 37,000 jobs if Big Three go under

WASHINGTON, D.C. — In voting in favor of the $14 billion emergency bridge loan for the nation's Big Three automakers, Oregon Congressman David Wu (D-1st District), said the state stands to lose more than 37,000 jobs if all three auto companies were to shut down.

"Car manufacturers are the industrial heart of America, but they do more than provide jobs in Detroit," Wu said. "If all three auto companies were to fail, Oregon would lose more than 37,000 jobs. The collapse of GM alone would cost Oregon more than 10,000 jobs. This bill was necessary to protect the extensive network of suppliers, dealers, employees, and consumers who would be hurt if these companies were to fold, while giving the manufacturers time to develop plans to secure their businesses for the long run."

The Economic Policy Institute says that if U.S. automakers go under, up to 3.3 million total jobs could be lost in the U.S. by this time next year, including all 192,800 assembly workers, 1 million indirect jobs and 2.1 million re-spending jobs.

Hardest hit would be Michigan (112,500 to 407,300 jobs lost), California (84,500 to 305,900 jobs), Ohio (60,500 to 219,100 jobs), Texas (55,200 to 200,000), Illinois (42,800 to 154,900), Indiana (40,700 to 147,300), and New York (39,900 to 144,600).