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SEIU demands 'McJustice'

Protesters denounce anti-union stance at 100 McDonalds locations

Around the United States, members and staff of Service Employees International Union (SEIU) went to McDonald's Dec. 18 — to protest the company's opposition to the Employee Free Choice Act. EFCA is a bill in Congress

that would make it easier for workers to form a union and win a first contract.

The protests were a response to a Nov. 25 memo to all 2,400 company franchisees from McDonald's USA President Don Thompson, which urged them to contact senators and representatives to oppose the Employee Free Choice Act. A copy of the memo was leaked to Crain's Chicago Business magazine. The memo said the legislation, if enacted, would "impact the McDonald's system." Accordingly, Thompson wrote, McDonald's had formed an internal "response team" to help franchisees "actively participate in the opposition to EFCA."

SEIU said its protesters visited nearly 100 McDonald's locations nationwide. Protesters passed out leaflets that asked, "How does McDonald's really feel about America's workers," and noted that the McDonald's CEO earns the equivalent of \$6,250 an hour, while workers are paid an average of \$8.11 an hour.

After the protests, the company released a statement saying their reported position against EFCA was a "misrepresentation" and that they "try not to take sides in political issues."



Staff and members of SEIU Local 503, above, show up Dec. 18 at a Salem McDonald's restaurant 1110 Center St., but not for the Dollar Menu.

192 union jobs cut at
Daimler (Freightliner)

Daimler Trucks North America (formerly Freightliner) opened the new year by announcing it will lay off 192 union workers at its Portland plant at the end of January and cut 2,137 production line workers from operations in Cleveland, Mount Holly, and Gastonia, North Carolina by the end of March.

Daimler made it known last October that it would cease making trucks at Portland's Swan Island Industrial Park by June 2010 as part of a major restructuring plan. But the early round of cuts took union officials by surprise.

"I certainly didn't see it coming; this was a surprise," said Joe Kear, a business representative of Machinists Lodge 1005.

Workers in Portland are represented by four unions — Machinists Lodge 1005; Sign Painters and Paint Makers Local 1094; Teamsters Local 305; and Service Employees Local 49. A total of 163 Machinists were given pink slips, along with 33 Painters, 16 Teamsters, and seven Service Employees.

By June 2010, 700 additional family-wage jobs will be gone.

Daimler Trucks North America corporate headquarters will remain in Portland for now, the company said. About 1,900 nonunion workers are still employed in administration, product development, procurement, and information technology. In 2007, the sales, marketing, and customer support work was relocated to Fort Mill,

South Carolina.

Portland production line workers were told Jan. 8 that orders for the Western Star brand truck were down dramatically in November and December, thus warranting the earlier-than-expected job cuts. Production has dropped from 17 Western Star trucks a day to just 10 trucks a day. The Portland plant also produces 10 military vehicles a day.

The plant once made all Freightliner trucks — with 3,000 union workers cranking out 112 trucks a day. But since 2000 the work has migrated in stages to plants in Mexico and North and South Carolina.

"Daimler is at the forefront in moving manufacturing work to Mexico," Kear said. "The company says the layoffs are due to market conditions, but Daimler isn't downsizing in Mexico at a comparable rate. It doesn't help to rebuild our (U.S.) economy by relying on imports, instead of building things here (in the U.S.)."

By June 2010, all Western Star production will take place in Santiago Tianguistenco, Mexico. More truck manufacturing will begin later this year at Daimler's brand new 1 million-square-foot facility in Saltillo, Mexico.

This migration to Mexico is costing jobs in the U.S. and Canada.

In Mt. Holly, 572 members of the United Auto Workers will be out of work March 13 when the company discontinues production of Class 6 and 7

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Twelve international union presidents hold 'unity meeting'

Leaders from AFL-CIO and Change to Win labor federations talk about reuniting

WASHINGTON, D.C. (PAI) — Prodded by transition team officials for President-Elect Barack Obama, 12 international union presidents held a "unity meeting" Jan. 7 in the nation's capital to try to figure out how the labor movement can speak with one voice, not three. They emerged pledging "broad participation" in the effort, but no specifics.

In attendance at the session, called by former

House Democratic Whip David Bonior, chair of American Rights at Work, were presidents of five of the seven unions that make up the Change to Win labor federation, six of the 56 AFL-CIO unions, and the new National Education Association President Dennis Van Roekel. His 3.2 million-member union is the nation's largest.

The presidents' joint statement said: "The goal is to create a unified labor movement that can speak and act nationally on the critical issues facing working Americans." It added that "while we represent the largest unions, we recognize unity requires broad participation."

Local union leaders hailed the news. Chicago Federation of Labor President Dennis Gannon said it would be "welcomed by local labor movements and stands to benefit all working people in this country."

Reunification at the top of organized labor would also ratify what has, to some extent, happened on the ground since Change To Win split from the AFL-CIO in 2005: close cooperation in elections and legislation.

Attending the meeting, besides Bonior and Van Roekel, were AFL-CIO member union presidents Larry Cohen (Communications Workers), Leo

Gerard (Steelworkers), Ron Gettelfinger (Auto Workers), Gerald McEntee (AFSCME), Ed Hill (International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers), and Randi Weingarten (American Federation of Teachers). Change to Win presidents attending were Joe Hansen (United Food and Commercial Workers), James Hoffa (Teamsters), Terry O'Sullivan (Laborers), Bruce Raynor (UNITE HERE), and Andy Stern (Service Employees).

The statement also said AFL-CIO President John Sweeney and Change to Win Chair Anna Burger joined the session, but that was not confirmed.