

Drawn-out campaign at Oregon bakery attests to need for EFCA

As organized labor prepares to battle in the nation's capital for a long-sought labor-law reform, the story of a year-and-a-half-long union campaign at a mid-sized Lake Oswego bakery shows why reform is necessary.

The Employee Free Choice Act — the union movement's number one priority in Congress — would make it easier for workers to obtain union representation and a first contract.

In short, the law would get rid of the danger, delay and uncertainty that kill most union campaigns when an employer is determined to resist them.

Eighteen months ago, union organizer Georgene Barragan took a job at Breadsong Bakery, a specialty bakery

in Lake Oswego, to try to unionize the workers. Breadsong, a unit of a subsidiary of agribusiness giant Cargill, employs about 30 production workers at about \$11.25 an hour. Some of its bread is sold under brand-names that are otherwise baked by members of Bakery, Confectionery Tobacco Workers & Grain Millers Local 114. The union wanted to prevent members' work from slipping away to a nonunion shop — and give the non-union workers a chance to earn the significantly higher union wage and benefit package — \$19.80 an hour and fully paid family health insurance coverage.

Barragan approached co-workers one by one, and by September, a major-

ity had signed cards saying they wanted to be represented by Local 114. Under the Employee Free Choice Act, that would have been enough for them to get a union. But under current law, employers don't have to accept that method of showing majority support, and can insist on an election. That usually means up to six weeks during which managers and outside consultants mount a full-court press to talk workers out of unionizing.

That's what happened at Breadsong. The union filed for an election Nov. 7, and a date was set — Dec. 19, 2007. Union organizers will recognize what followed as a textbook case of the standard anti-union playbook — a set of

proven tactics that employers have developed over decades to defeat union campaigns.

Managers called in workers one by one and interrogated them about the union campaign. Almost daily mandatory meetings were held, at which managers showed anti-union propaganda videos and handed out fliers warning workers about the dues they'd have to pay. And 12 days before the election, they fired Barragan — the most outspoken union supporter.

The union cried foul, and filed charges with the National Labor Relations Board, asking that the election be postponed. The federal agency agreed with the union that the law had been violated, and put off the election. An NLRB agent brokered an out-of-court settlement with the company. Barragan was reinstated June 24, 2008. A few months after that, a new date for the

election was set — Oct. 10, 2008.

But in the three weeks prior to the second scheduled election, the employer offensive ramped up again, says Local 114 Secretary-Treasurer Terry Lansing. Over a period of two weeks, the company held seven mandatory meetings at which company managers, corporate lawyers and the general manager spoke against the union. The company issued an annual wage increase to workers at other nonunion locations, but told Breadsong workers they couldn't have it because of the union campaign — and that they might not get a raise for a year if they vote the union in.

Workers were told they wouldn't be able to participate in the company stock ownership plan if they unionized. They were told, falsely, that dues would start coming out of their checks as soon as the union was voted in. Company rep-

(Turn to Page 11)

...Rolling out new EFCA campaign

(From Page 1)

ference launching the ad campaign.

It should be easier in the House, though, where Samuel expects the legislation will pass with a larger majority than in the 110th Congress. (It passed 241-185 in the House in 2007.)

Among elected officials in Oregon and Washington, support for the Employee Free Choice Act is particularly strong. The legislation's co-sponsors include U.S. Senators Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell of Washington, and Ron Wyden of Oregon; and U.S. Reps. David Wu, Earl Blumenauer, and Peter DeFazio of Oregon, and Brian Baird of Southwest Washington. All

are Democrats.

Newly-elected U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley of Oregon campaigned in favor of EFCA, and newly-elected Congressman Kurt Schrader (D-5th Dist.) of Oregon signed onto the bill as a co-sponsor on his first day in office.

Besides the Leadership Conference, other groups in the pro-worker campaign include the National Consumers League, the NAACP, La Raza Unida, People for the American Way, the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations, the National Partnership for Women and Families, Human Rights Watch, the Center for American Progress, the Americans for Democratic Action, and Interfaith Worker

Justice.

Speakers at the press conference warned the media about a misinformation campaign coming from business groups — particularly the U.S. Chamber of Commerce — about the Employee Free Choice Act. Most notably, the claim that EFCA would “destroy the secret ballot” in union recognition elections. The speakers noted unionists could still choose the election option, or majority signup (card-check). That choice would be up to the workers, not the bosses, under the bill, they said.

A list of myths and realities about the Employee Free Choice Act is posted on the facing page.

THE UNION PLUS® MORTGAGE PROGRAM Provided Exclusively by Chase Home Finance



When it comes to mortgages, we're taking a stand for Union members.

Chase is backing union members with the Union Plus® Mortgage Program — a home purchase and refinancing program exclusively for union members, their parents and children.

- **FREE Mortgage Assistance Benefit**
If you are unemployed or disabled.
- **A wide variety of mortgages**
Choose from fixed rate, adjustable-rate, and low- or no-closing costs options.
- **Special Lending**
First-time homebuyer and less-than-perfect credit programs.
- **Savings on closing costs**
Member-only savings on new purchases and refinance.

It all adds up to more home-buying power.
Contact your local Union Plus Mortgage Specialist
Call Bob Krueger at: **503-490-0459**



Union Plus is a registered trademark of Union Privilege. Eligibility for mortgage assistance begins one year after closing on a Union Plus Mortgage through Chase Home Finance. This offer may not be combined with any other promotional offer or rebate, is not transferable, and is available to bona fide members of participating unions. For down payments of less than 20%, mortgage insurance (MI) is required and MI charges apply. All loans are subject to credit and property approval. Program terms and conditions are subject to change without notice. Not all products are available in all states or for all loan amounts. Other restrictions and limitations apply. ©2008 JP Morgan Chase & Co. All Rights Reserved. P-UP 104 2A-7604

SERVING UNIONS FOR OVER 25 YEARS



QUALITY, AFFORDABLE FAMILY DENTAL CARE

- General, cosmetic, and specialty care
- Most insurance and union plans accepted
- Easy credit and low monthly payments, O.A.C.
- Evening and Saturday appointments
- Ask about our **Confident** Dental Discount Program

BEAVERTON, OR
(503) 644-1400
GRANTS PASS, OR
(541) 479-6696
GRESHAM, OR
(503) 492-8487
HILLSBORO, OR
ORENCO STATION
(503) 640-9999
MILWAUKIE, OR
(503) 659-2525
PORTLAND, OR
(503) 777-0761
SALEM, OR
(503) 362-8359

WILSONVILLE, OR
(503) 682-8552
Northwest Dental Associates, P.C.
VANCOUVER, WA
FISHER'S LANDING
(360) 891-1999
Sarah Barber, D.D.S.
Charles Stirewalt, D.D.S.
Chau Ngo, D.D.S.
VANCOUVER, WA
SALMON CREEK
(360) 574-4574
Phong Bui, D.M.D.
Charles Stirewalt, D.D.S.
Chau Ngo, D.D.S.
Stirewalt, P.C.

Protecting Union Member
Smiles and Wallets.
ORTHODONTICS AVAILABLE!

\$100 OFF
NON COVERED
DENTAL SERVICES

There may be future costs based on diagnosis. Limit one per person. Not valid on diagnostic or preventative services. Not redeemable for cash or credit. Must surrender at time of service. Valid for cash, PPO, Indemnity patients only. Can't be combined, subject to change, expires 12/31/2008.

1-888-BRIGHT NOW

www.BRIGHTNOW.com



©2007 Bright Now! Dental, Inc.

Bright Now! Dental
Smiles for Everyone!