

Teamsters dispute at Oak Harbor Freight Lines isn't over

International Brotherhood of Teamsters ended its unfair labor practice strike at Oak Harbor Freight Lines, but the labor dispute isn't over.

About 600 Teamsters members struck the privately-held regional trucking company Sept. 22 — alleging, in five separate charges, that the company had broken labor law. One of those charges was later withdrawn, and another was dismissed by National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) agent who investigated, but three minor charges were found to have merit. The company agreed Jan. 30 to settle those charges by

changing some company practices and posting a workplace notice.

Once the charges were settled, for union members to stay out would have made it an "economic" strike, which would have given Oak Harbor the right to permanently replace them. So Teamsters International Vice-President Al Hobart announced Feb. 12 that strikers were willing to return to work.

After several weeks of wrangling over the subject, Hobart made it clear that the union return-to-work offer was unconditional. Some drivers and dock workers returned the first week of

March. But others were laid off due to lack of work. The Everett, Washington, terminal is closed altogether — temporarily, the company said. Business is down due to the strike and economic conditions.

Teamsters say Oak Harbor lost more than half its business during the strike. Striking drivers used their relationships with local customers to get them to switch to other shippers, while a union "corporate campaign" persuaded big companies like JC Penney and The Gap to cancel accounts.

Workers returned without the protection of a union contract. Their last contract expired Oct. 31, 2007. Oak Harbor imposed its own terms on returning strikers. It ceased making contributions to the Teamster-sponsored health and

pension plans. Workers say the company isn't honoring seniority rules, and managers are doing the work of bargaining unit members.

Oak Harbor also refused to return 13 workers, saying they were suspended for supposed strike misconduct, and that more suspensions could come. Meanwhile, anti-union workers — helped by the National Right to Work Foundation — have petitioned the NLRB to decertify the union at eight terminals: Auburn, Mt. Vernon, Pasco, Spokane, and Wenatchee, Washington; Medford and Salem, Oregon; and Boise, Idaho. The terminals, totaling 250 workers, make up nearly half the company's union membership. The NLRB has not yet set election dates for workers at those terminals to vote on whether to stay union.

Every indication is that Oak Harbor Freight Lines orchestrated the entire conflict expressly to bust the union. Even before contract negotiations began in 2007, Oak Harbor co-president David Vander Pol told the Teamsters' Hobart that company owners had met with East Coast shipping company managers who'd defeated Teamster strikes and eliminated the union, and that Oak Harbor was prepared to pursue that. Up to two years before the strike, the company was contracting to recruit striker replacements. To represent it in bargaining, Oak Harbor hired a law firm that specializes in union avoidance. And when the strike began, the company returned to operation almost immediately, using workers brought in by a strike-breaking temp agency.

U.S. Court dismisses Cintas RICO suit

NEW YORK — Calling the complaint "sprawling" and "larded," U.S. District Court Judge William H. Pauley has dismissed a racketeering lawsuit filed by Fortune 500 company Cintas Corp. against UNITE HERE, the Teamsters, and Change to Win.

Cintas filed the suit in March 2008, claiming the unions had mounted negative and false attacks on the company as part of an "extortion" campaign during an organizing drive.

Union officials described the lawsuit as a broader campaign of coercion to keep workers from forming a union.

Judge Pauley called the complaint "a manifesto ... that is more a public relations piece than a pleading." He said Cintas "does not have the right to operate free from any criticism, organized or not," noting the constitutional free-speech protection given to labor activities.

...Gregoire, Chopp, Brown kill priority labor bill

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announce it in a press conference, and send the e-mail to law enforcement.

"We are no longer considering action on ... the Worker Privacy Act," said Gregoire, Chopp, and Brown in their joint press statement. "Immediately upon becoming aware of an e-mail linking potential action on the bill to campaign contributions, bringing the bill forward was no longer an option. The e-mail raises serious legal and ethical

questions. The matter has been referred to the Washington State Patrol for investigation."

WSLC President Rick Bender reacted later that day on the WSLC Web site: "We regret the incident. It was a result of frustration with the Legislature's failure to protect workers rights in the workplace."

"The Washington State Labor Council proudly stands behind our efforts to pass the Worker Privacy Act," Bender said in a second statement the follow-

ing day. "Early Tuesday morning, an e-mail communication related to the Privacy Act was inadvertently delivered to the offices of several Washington State legislators. We regret that this unintentional communication has stalled consideration of this important legislation."

Bender said to Daily Olympian political blogger Adam Wilson that he was unaware of any other case where legislative leaders responded to heavy lobbying by burying the bills and calling the cops.



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And from mid-April to June 11 at the Teamsters Joint Council #37 Credit Union, 1866 NE 162nd Ave., Portland

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Stagecoach Saloon, 20101 NE Sandy, Fairview
Gateway Pub, 39100 Pioneer Blvd, Sandy
Carver Hanger, 16196 SE Hwy 224, Clackamas (Carver)
IBEW Local 48, 15937 NE Airport Way, Portland
Pub 181, 18415 SE Division St., Portland
Mason's Custom Cycles, 439 NE 3rd Ave. #A100, Canby
Seasons & Regions Seafood Grill, 6660 SW Capitol Hwy., Portland

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