

IN MEMORIAM

Douglas G. Ellis, a union member for 70 years, died at his home April 30 at the age of 96.

During the course of his working career, Ellis was a member of several unions, including the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Locals 48, 125 and 49 (which merged with Local 48); Machinists Lodge 1005, and Service Employees Local 503.

Ellis served as a union representative for both Locals 48 and 49 in the mid-1940s. He also was a field rep for the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries apprenticeship and training division.

In 1956, Ellis was hired as director of the Northwest Electrical Line Construction Apprenticeship Committee by IBEW Local 125 and the National Electrical Contractors Association. Two years later he moved to Washington, D.C., to work as director of the



NECA/IBEW National Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee.

Ellis returned to Portland and BOLI's apprenticeship division, where he worked until retiring in 1977.

In retirement, Ellis was active in several retirees groups.

He was named to the Northwest Oregon Labor Retirees Council Labor Hall of Fame in March 2000.

Douglas Gardiner Ellis was born in Portland on Feb. 11, 1913.

He graduated from Roosevelt High School and studied parliamentary law, economics, politics and union history in an adult night school.

He is survived by his wife, Maria Luiza, and a daughter, Lorraine, by a previous marriage.

A memorial service will be held Monday, May 18, at 1 p.m. at the IBEW Local 48 Hall, 15937 NE Airport Way, Portland.

'Real' U.S. unemployment at 15.8%

WASHINGTON, D.C. — New data out May 8 show 539,000 more workers lost their jobs in April and the nation's unemployment rate worsened to 8.9 percent (13.7 million), from 8.5 percent in March, reported the U.S. Department of Labor.

Jobs lost in April were spread across nearly all major private-sector industries. Jobs lost include 149,000 in manufacturing; 110,000 in the construction industry; 122,000 in professional and business services; and 47,000 in the services industry.

The number of long-term unemployed (those jobless for 27 weeks or more) increased by 498,000 to 3.7 million over the month and has risen by 2.4 million since the start of the recession in December 2007.

The official unemployment rate is bad. But the real unemployment rate is far worse. If those who are underemployed or who want a job but have given up looking are counted, the U.S. unemployment rate stands at 15.8 per-

cent — more than 25 million Americans, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Just to keep up with the population growth, the nation must add approximately 127,000 jobs a month — and the economy is more than 7 million jobs below what is needed to maintain pre-recession employment levels.

Senator on quest to find changes in Employee Free Choice Act

WASHINGTON, D.C. (PAI) — U.S. Sen. Tom Harkin (D-Iowa), the lead sponsor of the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA), is discussing changes in the bill in order to pick up the needed 60 Senate votes to overcome a planned Republican filibuster against it.

Harkin told Bloomberg News the changes may include dropping a key provision — majority sign-up — because there is too much opposition to it.

But Harkin spokeswoman Kate Cyril told PAI the senator still stands by the bill's core principles of leveling the playing field in organizing drives, increasing penalties for labor law violators, and ensuring that once unions are recognized, employers must sign a first contract in a timely fashion.

Majority sign-up is considered the meat of the bill because it would take the choice of how a union is recognized out of the hands of bosses and put it into the hands of workers. Majority sign-up and secret ballot elections are already allowed under federal labor law.

Management has a history of aggressively campaigning against unions once they learn of an organizing campaign. However, with enough time and money they oftentimes can intimidate workers into changing their support of a union.

Harkin's position is important because the Senate is the battleground for the Employee Free Choice Act.

Businesses and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce have teamed up to raise nearly \$300 million to fight the bill, which also would limit bargaining for a first contract to 120 days before going to binding arbitration.

Marketing research conducted by business groups found that the mandatory sign-up element of the bill (often referred to as card-check) was the most controversial. So Big Business launched a massive advertising campaign to "preserve the secret ballot."

That convinced Republican-turned-Democrat Sen. Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania to oppose the bill and back the filibuster. Others suddenly having qualms about the bill are Blanche Lincoln (D-Ark.), Ben Nelson (D-Neb.), and Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.).

Still, a majority of senators support the Employee Free Choice Act. But with the threatened filibuster looming, supporters need 60 votes to cut off debate (end the filibuster). In the face of their continued inability to reach that magic number, Harkin discussed changes to the bill.

"Compromises are going to be made," he told Bloomberg News. Changing the bill could gain "grudging

support" from both labor and business, he said.

Cyril said the senator was just recognizing the reality of how to garner the needed 60 votes, but he would not budge on the bill's core values.

"Sen. Harkin was merely acknowledging a few Democratic senators expressed concerns about the card check provisions of the bill as they are written now," she said. "He remains confident we can address these issues without compromising the core provisions."

Among the changes being discussed are dropping the card-signing provision and setting a 21-day deadline for an election to be held, the Wall Street Journal reported, noting that Specter is "generally supportive" of that idea.

The New York Times reported that Feinstein is considering a plan that would allow workers to sign union cards and mail them to the National Labor Relations Board. If a majority mailed cards, the Board would order the employer to recognize the union.

Harkin's spokeswoman said Democrats agree that the current system is broken and that real reform is needed to level the playing field.

"(Sen. Harkin) believes we are on the right track, and we will get a bill to the president's desk that achieves these important goals," Cyril said.

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