

Washington State Labor Council leaders pass the baton

By **DON McINTOSH**
Associate Editor

SEATTLE — Rick Bender and Al Link have fought for Washington workers for 16 years — at the head of the Washington State Labor Council (WSLC). On Jan. 5, they passed the mantle to Jeff Johnson and Lynne Dodson.

WSLC is a state-level body of the AFL-CIO labor union federation. Its

leaders are in charge of unifying and mobilizing the clout of 500-plus local unions with a combined membership of 400,000.

Parallels are striking among these four leaders. Early in their tenure at WSLC, President Bender and Secretary-Treasurer Link had to contend with an election sweep by anti-union Republicans; President Johnson and Secretary-Treasurer Dodson began office fac-

ing another Republican sweep. The new leaders are the grandchildren of Pennsylvania coal miners; both are also labor academics and have been anti-war activists. Bender and Link are the sons of labor leaders; both rode the draft to Vietnam.

All four have an enduring belief in unions as an indispensable protection for workers — in the workplace and in politics.



JIM JOHNSON



LYNNE DODSON

...IAM, Woodworkers districts merge

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Lodge 24, will retain that position with Machinists District W24.

The governing body for the new district is a delegate council, which will meet at least twice a year. An executive board, consisting of the five officers mentioned above, also includes four trustees: John Hall of Local 63, Ray Simonis of Local 1005, Mike Heuer of W536, and Gary Lokan of W246.

Machinists District W24 is chartered to cover Oregon, Washington, California, Idaho, Montana, Colorado, Wyoming, Alaska, and

Hawaii.

The Machinists Hall off Powell Boulevard in Southeast Portland is being appraised and will be put up for sale. The union staff — and Machinists Credit Union — will relocate to the Woodworkers' headquarters in Gladstone. That building will undergo modifications to accommodate the District 24 staff, so the move isn't anticipated until April.

DBR Wilson said Machinists District W24 will focus on organizing. Over the past 18 months W1 won six of eight organizing campaigns.

"We are organizing because it helps us at negotiations," he said.

"Everyone fails together if we aren't organized. If we are, we rise together."

Assistant DBR Petroff said business agents will maintain their current assignments servicing members, but will spend up to half their time organizing.

"A combination of the staffs and the local leaderships is a great way to maximize the effectiveness of our organizing efforts," Petroff said.

"In the long run, we will be spending less on administration," DBR Wilson noted. "But we won't sacrifice representation."

Rick Bender, 61, was a state lawmaker who became a labor leader. His father was school board president, business manager at Cement Masons Local 528, and eventually head of the Seattle Building Trades Council and the King County Labor Council. The younger Bender apprenticed as a cement mason and laborer, and attended University of Washington. In 1966, he drew a low draft number, and enlisted voluntarily. He spent time at the U.S. Army's Long Binh supply depot in Vietnam, and returned home in 1972. That year, he was recruited to run for state house, and beat a three-term Republican incumbent by 149 votes. Thus began a legislative ca-

reer that lasted until 1991.

In 1987, by then a state senator, Bender was approached to run for secretary-treasurer of the Seattle Building Trades Council, the job his father had once held; he outpolled three others to win the office. His rise within organized labor culminated in his 1993 election as WSLC president.

Al Link, 67, got his start in labor in 1961, when he went to work at the Kaiser Aluminum smelter north of Spokane. His father worked there, and had been president of Steelworkers Local 329. Like Bender, Link had volun-

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